

# CINEFANTASTIQUE

\$4.95

CAN \$6.25  
UK£3.00

July 1988

Volume 18 Number 5

## FREDDY MANIA!

**PREVIEW NIGHTMARE  
ON ELM STREET'S NEW  
MOVIE AND TV SERIES**

**FREDDY'S CREATOR,  
WES CRAVEN,  
ON WHY HE'S QUITTING**

**PLUS: SHORT CIRCUIT 2,  
ON A TROUBLED SET**

**REMAKING THE BLOB**

**PHANTASM 2, SHOOTING  
TALL MAN'S RETURN**

**Robert  
Englund  
as Elm  
Street's  
Freddy  
Krueger**



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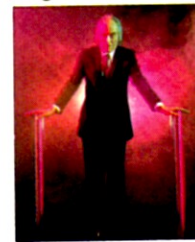
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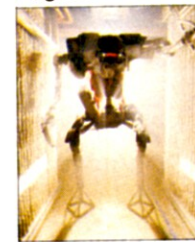
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Movies are an art form, but they're also a business. That uneasy dichotomy is behind this issue's cover story on Freddy Krueger, the cool ghoul of New Line Cinema's increasingly popular A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET film series. Freddy's the hottest franchise in the horror movie business, with a new feature film due in August and a television series planned for the Fall.

But Wes Craven, the writer and director who created the first and best film in the series in 1984, has gone public this issue with his dissatisfaction about the direction the series has taken. In an interview Craven gave Chicago critic Dann Gire during promotion for Craven's SERPENT AND THE RAINBOW earlier this year, Craven detailed his frustration in working with New Line and vowed never to work on the series again. The director lashed-out at what he termed the "franchise" mentality at New Line, where Craven claims they use "a formula [to] crank them out."

Craven's complaints about the series are answered by New Line executives Bob Shaye and Sara Risher, the producers who have developed the Elm Street property into an unprecedented commercial success. Shaye provides a preview of the forthcoming sequel, A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET IV: THE DREAMMASTER, and talks about plans for FREDDY'S NIGHTMARES, a new TV series slated for syndication in October. Shaye readily admits that New Line looks on the films as "date movies" and details the company's "committee" approach in developing each new entry in the series. Said Shaye, "Any belief in auteur filmmaking, I think, does a disservice to the process."

*Frederick S. Clarke*

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**BUREAUS:** New York/ Dan Scapperotti. Los Angeles/ Steve Biodrowski, Sheldon Teitelbaum. London/ Alan Jones. Rome/ Giuseppe Salza.

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**PHOTO CREDITS:** Myles Aronowitz (17 top), Dan Arseneault (26), © Clive Barde London (12), © 1988 J. Bisson R. Ciarella (16 left), Ted Bohus (50 top, bottom right), © Caglione & Drexler (39: 1-2, 4-8), © 1987 Cannon (42,43), Dan Dailowicz (32,33), © 1988 Gelfen (52 top), Richard Golumb (17 bottom), Alex Gotfryd (46), Vincent Guastini (50 left), Roger Jans (10 bottom), © 1988 Lucastilm (52 bottom right), Bruce McBroom (4,5), © 1987 MGM (Dean Williams 34-38, 39,3), © 1988 Pacific Trust (51), © 1988 Paramount (Michael Ansell 52 bottom left, Bruce Ialoman 14 right), Don Smetner (25 right), Peter Sorel (24,25 left, bottom), © 1988 20th Century-Fox (Jane O'Neal 21 right), © 1988 Universal (48 top, 28 bottom, left). **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:** Lance Anderson, Bart Mixon, Mark Williams.

**CINEFANTASTIQUE MAGAZINE** (ISSN 0145-6032) is published five times a year, in January, March, May, July, and September at P.O. Box 270, Oak Park, IL 60303. (312) 366-5566. Second class postage paid at Forest Park, IL 60130. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to CINEFANTASTIQUE, P.O. Box 270, Oak Park, IL 60303. **Subscriptions:** Four Issues \$18, Eight Issues \$34, Twelve Issues \$48. (*Foreign & Canada:* Four issues \$21, Eight Issues \$39, Twelve Issues \$55) Single issues when purchased from publisher: \$6. **Retail Distribution:** In the U.S. by Eastern News Distributors, 250 W. 55th St., New York, N.Y. 10019. (1-800-221-3148). In Great Britain by Titan Distributors, P.O. Box 250, London E3 4RI. Phone: (01) 980-6167. **Submissions** of artwork and articles are encouraged, but no correspondence can be answered unless accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Printed in USA. Contents copyright © 1988 by Frederick S. Clarke. **CINEFANTASTIQUE®** is a Registered U. S. Trademark.

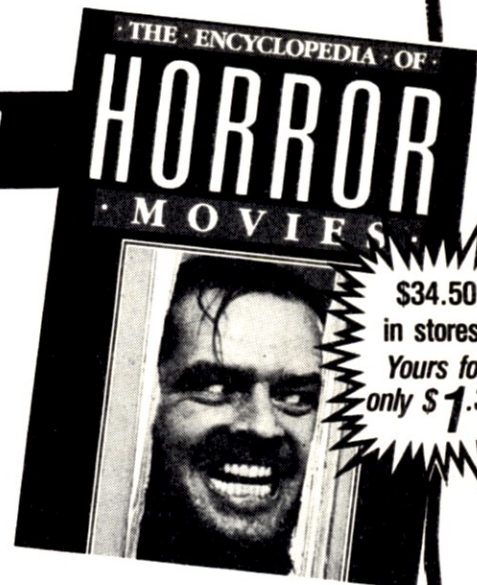
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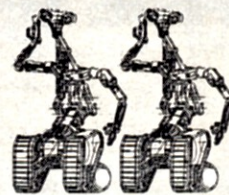
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# SHORT CIRCUIT



## Cute, anthropomorphic robot Johnny 5 is back for more effects-laden formula hijinks.

By Gary Kimber

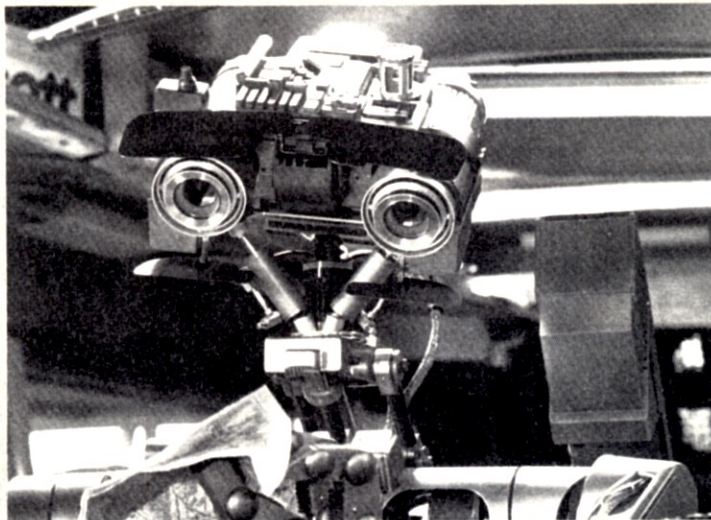
On location in Toronto, robot Johnny 5 is put through his paces by director Kenneth Johnson and effects supervisor Eric Allard. In the complicated scene, filmed with an army of off-camera technicians, the little robot goes crashing through the window of a towering fifty story office building and hang glides safely to earth. The film is *SHORT CIRCUIT II*, Tri-Star's sequel to their highly popular 1986 film, which was directed by John Badham.

I asked the film's co-producer David Foster if television director Kenneth Johnson is living up to his expectations.

Foster looked at me in absolute astonishment and replied, "What kind of wise ass question is that?" As Foster muttered other profanities I moved several feet away in case he intended to take a swipe at me. This is not a happy set.

Reportedly some three weeks behind schedule after six weeks of filming, the costly, complex special effects-laden production was running up big bills for Foster's Turman/Foster production company, his partnership with Lawrence Turman. Earlier in the day, according to Allard, Foster had exploded about something Johnson had failed to do to Foster's satisfaction. Add to this the pressure of having representatives of the local print and media on hand to view the filming as both Johnson and Allard took swipes at each other to explain the delays.

"It's been the shits," said Allard about working with Johnson. "He just doesn't communicate with the effects crew. It's like he is always looking for someone to blame when anything goes wrong. They had a local television station down here one day and he said 'It's like Murphy's Law, whatever can go wrong will go



Johnny 5, designed for the 1986 John Badham film by visual futurist Syd Mead.

wrong.' I mean, come on, give me a break. He's bad rapping us already!"

But it'll all be sweetness and light on screen, just like the original, when Tri-Star opens the film July 15th. True to the established Hollywood precept that it is easier to trot out tried and true concepts, the sequel breaks no new ground. Only Fisher Stevens as the Indian scientist, who speaks in malapropisms, returns from the original cast. The story, once again by S. S. Wilson and Brent Maddock, brings robot Johnny 5 to the big city. Stevens is now a struggling toy designer who joins forces with cheap street hustler Michael McKean (*LAVERNE & SHIRLEY*) to mass produce 1000 toy robots for Cynthia Gibb (*FAME*). Using money from a loan shark, they set up shop in a building beside a bank where timid teller Jack Weston works, and where jewel thieves are tunnelling to steal a priceless collection of diamonds. To scare the toymakers into leaving, the thieves destroy all the robots. Just when all appears to be lost, lo and behold, Johnny 5 mysteriously arrives in a crate, sent by someone in Montana.

Gary Foster, who is co-producing the

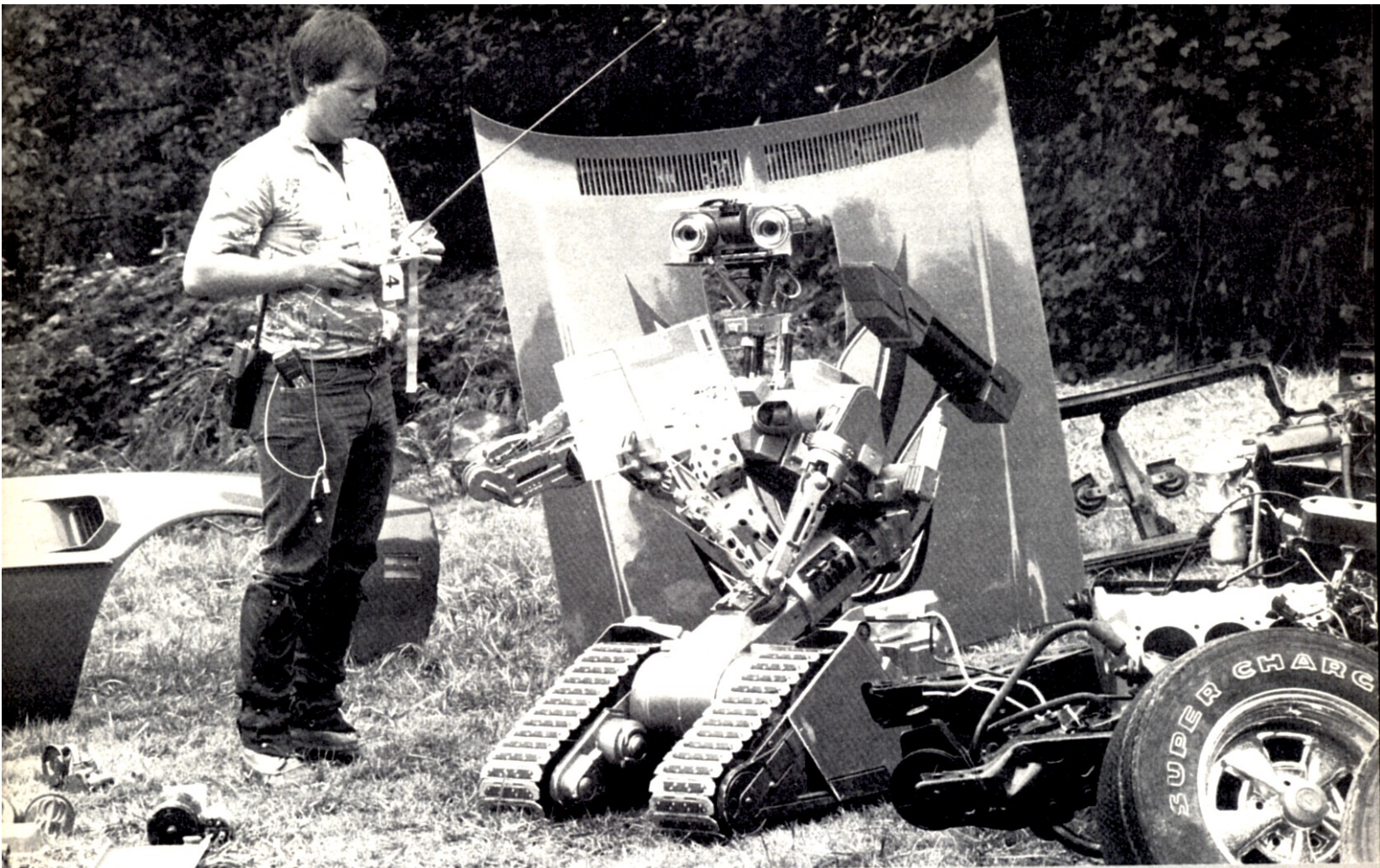
film with his father, and who was associate producer of the original, didn't react as volcanically when asked to compare Kenneth Johnson to John Badham. "Badham loved the technology, like toys," said the 26 year-old Foster. "Johnson likes playing with the technology too, but he is not as much an enthusiast." According to Foster it was Tri-Star's decision to go with Johnson, who created, produced and directed *V* and *THE INCREDIBLE HULK* for television. "But we approved it," Foster stressed. *SHORT CIRCUIT II* had been in development with Badham originally, but the director bowed out to film *STAKE-*

*OUT*, according to Foster.

Foster said that he felt that Johnson's strengths as director would be in handling the film's dramatic elements. "Ken [Johnson] is in tune with the script and the actors," he said. "His take on the story is to look at Johnny 5 as a person, not as a robot. It's a fun-loving character and he treats it that way."

In the script, Johnny 5 gets curious about big city life and breaks away to do a little unsupervised sight-seeing. Like the first film there's a lot of cute bits where he visits a record store, a video store and helps a gang of car thieves because he thinks they are part of the "Department of Car Stereo Repair." After a series of wild misadventures, Weston convinces the robot to complete the tunnel and steal the jewels, after which the thieves smash him to pieces. But don't worry. It's just cheap Hollywood manipulation. McKean has the robot repaired in no time, ready to catch the thieves, be acclaimed a hero and get sworn-in as the first robotic citizen of America.

Script writers Brent Maddock and S. S. Wilson got \$360,000 for their script of the



Effects supervisor Eric Allard with the ROV (remotely controlled vehicle) of Johnny 5 built for the original. On the sequel Allard has been promoted to associate producer.

original film, done as an assignment while students at UCLA. They went on to do a rewrite of Steven Spielberg's *BATTERIES NOT INCLUDED* and Steve Martin is now starring in their script *GHOST DAD*, also filming for Spielberg's Amblin Entertainment. "It's just an amazing success story," said Foster, who put their first script into development at his father's company. "Their price is now probably around \$500,000."

Foster explained how Wilson and Maddock collaborated on their script for *SHORT CIRCUIT II*. "They are linked in Los Angeles over the telephone. Steve [Wilson] is the structure guy and Brent [Maddock] comes up with the characters and gags. They work at home, separately. At 3 o'clock every day they link-up and start to work. They see each other, of course, but a lot of the time it's over the telephone line."

You would think that after having conquered the problems of creating a working, humanistic robot for the first film that doing it all again would be a breeze. Such, however, doesn't seem to be the case. "We literally gutted every last component, including wires, of the robot from the first film and rebuilt," said Eric Allard who, in addition to serving as effects supervisor, has been elevated to associate producer on the sequel. "The frames are still there, but that is about all. We have made a lot of

improvements."

Allard, a former Green Beret demolitions expert, made a name for himself by building the robots used in the original film after having worked on Showscan shorts for Douglas Trumbull. For the sequel, Allard designed an improved telemetrically operated robot prop which duplicates the electronically transmitted movements of an operator performing inside an off-camera telemetric suit. Three other operators are needed to control the eyes, "turkey neck" and other facial features, as well as drive the robot. On the original Allard said it took up to twelve technicians to operate what he called the film's "ROV" (remotely operated vehicle).

"The Tri-Star executives at first were apprehensive about letting us build the telemetric suit," said Allard. "But for good reason. So often people get involved in these situations where they are talked into going the high-tech route and end up getting burned by it. Look at the mechanical shark in *JAWS IV*. The word in the industry was it was a piece of junk, a real bowzer."

Allard said director Kenneth Johnson was "real keen" on the idea of using telemetry and had three Toronto-based puppeteers flown to L.A. to rehearse the suit under Johnson's direction. The execs were happy and the rest, as they say, is history and, oh yes, about \$70,000 for the two

suits.

Another main difference between the progenitor and offspring is "We made all the various axes [of movement] proportional," said Allard. "If you take your [control] stick and move it a quarter to the left, the robot head moves a quarter to the left. It makes it much easier to control, and you've eliminated more than half the number of people needed to control it. Now the robot can gesticulate when he talks. You can photograph him in his entirety now."

While Allard appreciated director Kenneth Johnson's support in selling the idea of the sophisticated telemetry suits to Tri-Star, he said Johnson was over-using the technique for scenes where the subtle movements of a prop puppeteered off-camera would serve better. "He [Johnson] is not at all comfortable working with the puppets," said Allard. "In fact, we have all but eliminated their use. It is a big change for us because it wasn't expected. I thought once we got involved he would learn about the puppets but he doesn't seem to want to."

Allard said the robot puppets are especially important in scenes requiring hand articulation. "You cannot operate the fingers separately on the full scale robot," he said. "The puppets were used 70-30% over the ROV's in the first film. On this one we

continued on page 56

# NIGHTMARE

## ON ELM STREET

### T H E P H E N O M E N O N

**A new sequel in August, a television series in October, Freddy Krueger is a horror franchise.**

By Frederick S. Clarke

NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET IV: THE DREAMMASTER began filming for New Line Cinema at the end of April in Los Angeles, scheduled for release August 19. Buoyed by the ever-increasing popularity of its Elm Street star, Freddy Krueger, the company also has FREDDY'S NIGHTMARES in development with Lorimar,

a series of twenty-two one-hour shows scheduled for television syndication in October. Presiding over his Elm Street empire, the hottest franchise in the horror business, is New Line's CEO Bob Shaye, who produced the first film in the series in 1984.

"Freddy Krueger and A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET have entered the iconography of American popular culture," said Shaye, speaking from New Line's LA office in April, where he was overseeing the start of the new sequel. The series has brought in over \$42 million in rentals to New Line in the domestic market alone, per figures from *Variety*. Most interesting is how the sequels have defied the law of diminishing returns: the original film made over \$9 million;



In A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET IV: THE DREAMMASTER, coming in August, the Dream Warriors of Part 3 are back to combat Freddy: (l to r) Rodney Eastman (Joey), Patricia Arquette (Kristen), the Dreammaster now played by Tuesday Knight, and Ken Sagoes (Kincaid).

PART 2: FREDDY'S REVENGE made \$12 million in 1985; and last year's PART 3: DREAM WARRIORS brought in more than \$21 million, as much as the first two films combined!

"It's a little scary," joked Shaye about the way boxoffice returns for the series have skyrocketed. "Obviously you know what our goal is for PART 4: I hope we achieve it." Shaye's strategy to reach new boxoffice heights is to schedule the next entry for summer release, the first in the series to open at a time when movies traditionally reap their biggest financial rewards. "Summer dates are wildly more valuable," said Shaye. "The kids are out of school. Every weekday has the potential to draw like a weekend. It's the perfect time for a

strong independent picture to be released."

PART 4: THE DREAMMASTER again stars Robert Englund as Elm Street ghoul Freddy Krueger, pitted against the surviving "dream warriors" of Part 3, played by Rodney Eastman, Tuesday Knight (replacing Patricia Arquette in the role of Kristen) and Ken Sagoes. "It's about somebody who finally thinks they're ready for Freddy," said Shaye, referring to Knight's character, the "Dreammaster" of the title, who grows stronger in her ability to fight Freddy as he bumps off each new teenager. At the climax Knight liberates the souls of Freddy's victims, trapped within his body, one of the film's grand makeup effects set pieces.

Series creator Wes Craven,

who wrote and directed the original film, is not involved in Part 4 (see page 8). To direct the new entry, Shaye hired Renny Harlin, whose last film was PRISON, currently in regional release from Empire Pictures. "We thought a lot of talent was demonstrated in PRISON," said Shaye, who added that Elm Street star Robert Englund was never considered because of "logistical problems." Englund recently made his debut as

a director on Cinetel's horror production 976-EVIL (18:4:14). "Englund's 3-4 hours of makeup as Freddy would seriously interfere with his ability to direct," said Shaye. "We may want to solve that someday." Shaye pointed out that Englund will be directing segments of the forthcoming TV series.

The script for THE DREAMMASTER was worked on by a succession of writers during a lengthy development process at New Line. The original script was written by William Kotzwinkle, author of the novelization for E.T., who came up with the concept of the "Dreammaster." Brian Helgeland, Englund's scriptwriter on 976-EVIL, was brought in for a rewrite. Brothers Jim and Ken Wheat, who wrote THE FLY II, were hired next, reportedly



Robert Englund as Freddy films a blue screen special effect for Part 3. Englund (shown inset) recently directed his own horror film, 976-EVIL, for CineTel Films. Englund is wearing Kevin Yagher's makeup design, showing the souls of Freddy's victims, trapped in his body. In the new sequel the Dreammaster rips them out.



to pare down the story's ambitious special effects to practical dimensions for filming. And C. Courtney Joyner, Harlin's scripter on PRISON, was rumored to have done a final polish shortly before filming got underway. Credit on the shooting script reads "Based on a script by Jim and Ken Wheat." Shaye said the final credit is to be decided by arbitration proceedings at the Writer's Guild, an automatic process when more than one writer is involved, something he termed "a foregone conclusion and not even an adversarial procedure."

Shaye said the development process on each new film in the Elm Street series begins with listening to writers pitch ideas. "You want to be true to the spirit of pleasing your audience," he said. "And you want to be different." Included in the process with Shaye are Sara Risher, New Line's president in charge of production, Rachel Talalay, vice president in charge of production and line producer of the Elm Street

films, and New Line execs Michael DeLuca, director of product development in New York, and Guy Reidel, director of creative affairs in Los Angeles.

Said Shaye, "It's a communal effort among people who've been brought up with Freddy as opposed to somebody whose brainchild it was going off to do the writing and then coming back and saying, 'Well, okay, here's the script.'" Shaye said the group bit on the "Dreammaster" idea pitched by Kotzwinkle, an approach which was suggested in a brief proposal dangled before the New Line execs which ended by saying, "see my agent if you want to know more."

Besides what Shaye termed Kotzwinkle's "new approach to heroes and heroines," the latest sequel will also showcase "spectacular and very innovative special effects." New Line has hired six independent companies to shoulder the effects load, a group Shaye termed "the best of a new crop of technicians. The film will be a real

showcase for their companies and their talents." Back from previous Elm Street films are Jim Doyle, who supervised effects for the original, and makeup artist Kevin Yagher, who will again be in charge of Englund's transformation into Freddy Krueger. Also reportedly working on the film are Steve Johnson (DEAD HEAT), Chris Biggs (CRITTERS 2) and Screaming Mad George, who used to run the makeup shop at Richard Edlund's Boss Films.

The dazzling effects work, which has become a hallmark of the NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET series, doesn't come cheap. Shaye said the budget for Part 4 will be substantially higher than the \$4.7 million it cost to film Part 3 (the expense for Parts 1 & 2 was to \$1.8 million and \$2.2 million, respectively). "We are pulling out all the stops to meet the film's summer release date," said Shaye. "We are paying a premium on a number of fronts to get the film ready."

Ironically, should New Line

meet its August 19th release date ("There could be some slippage," said Shaye), their film will open the same day as Universal's PHANTASM 2 and Tri-Star's THE BLOB, directed by Chuck Russell, who made A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 3: DREAM WARRIORS, New Line's previous Freddy hit. Shaye didn't sound like he was worried about the competition.

And Shaye is especially high on the prospects for the new TV series (which he is executive producing), already cleared nationwide by Lorimar, New Line's production partner in the venture. Gil Adler, who worked on THE HITCHHIKER, is producing the show which features Freddy as the wrap-around host for a cast of HILL STREET BLUES-like continuing characters. Shaye said that he expects the TV series will further support and enhance the impact of New Line's feature film series. "The films will always have the 'goods' that only Freddy can deliver," he said. □



# BYE BYE, FREDDY!

**Elm Street  
creator  
Wes Craven  
quits series**

*By Dann Gire*

The third sequel to Wes Craven's breakthrough horror film *NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET* is already in preparation, but without any assistance or blessing from the creator of the original. Craven, who took the evil spirit of a scarred child molester named Freddy Krueger and turned him into the Darth Vader of the '80s, will not be part of the creative team behind *NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 4*, which New Line Cinema plans to release August 19. Personally, Craven said he is happy not to be associated with the series anymore.

"I detach myself from it entirely," Craven said of the series. "Artistically, I think the first film was an intact, whole film and it makes the statement I started out to make. I never

Robert Englund as Freddy Krueger in makeup by Kevin Yagher in *A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 3: DREAM WARRIORS* (1987), developed from an idea by Craven, who co-wrote the script and also served as executive producer.



intended to make a sequel. NIGHTMARE 2 I discount. NIGHTMARE 3 I thought was an interesting step up, although I would have made it much darker and more complex than it ended up being. I'm not interested in participating in any more. I read the script [to No. 4]. I don't even think it's worth going into because they [New Line Cinema executives] were not happy with it and they were going to change it drastically. The script I saw was written by William Kotzwinkle. He's obviously a gifted writer. But when they had problems with the script, they came to me and my partner Bruce Wagner to rewrite it.

"Bruce and I thought if we were going to be approached, we should be approached as artists of the original material," continued Craven. "So, New Line went off to do some more work with the script they had. They never really contacted us again. That's their way. They come and they go. They're nice people, but it doesn't look as if I'll have anything to do with the making of NIGHTMARE 4."

The fall-out between Craven and the business interests behind the NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET phenomenon, namely producer Robert Shaye, can be traced back to the end of the first movie when Craven was more or less forced to abandon his artistic vision for the sake of Shaye's marketing strategy.

"The first NIGHTMARE was my film and I controlled it all the way through except for the last few minutes," Craven said. "I ended it in the script this way: the heroine turns her back on Freddy. He leaps for her and he goes screaming off into nothingness. She comes out of the house the next day. Her friends pull up to the curb in the car, the whole street is in fog. The kids drive off into the fog and you never know if the whole thing is a dream or not. You don't see Freddy or the Freddy car. It's like a full circle. You start in a dream, you end

**“They think of these movies as ‘a good cheeseburger.’ It shouldn’t be a formula that you determine and you crank them out and kids go to them like fast food.”**

*- Director Wes Craven -*



Heather Langenkamp and Craven, filming the original A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET (1984).

in a dream.”

But Shaye had other ideas about the ending. He wanted a CARRIE-like jolt plus a “hook” to hang a sequel on. So, the final NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET inexplicably and ridiculously resurrected Freddy in time for him to pull the heroine's mom, Hope Lange, through the window in her front door and cart away screaming teenagers trapped inside a convertible car. Shaye originally wanted Freddy to be driving the car, but Craven refused.

"I had gone three years with that film," said Craven about the original's development. "Nobody would back it. I was flat broke. I had to borrow money to pay my taxes. I was absolutely down and out. Bob Shaye was the only person willing to back it and raise the money. He told me, 'Look, this is a partnership. Give me this one thing. Give me a hook to hang on the end for a sequel. That and some jump at the end.' It was a compromise. I felt I owed him that because he had seen the value of the film. He had raised the money.

Sometimes you make a compromise and years later you say, 'I'm sorry I did it.' On the other hand, there might not have been any NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET at all if I hadn't done that. So, the end of my compromise was that I would not have Freddy sitting in the front seat. I will not have him driving that car."

In Craven's mind, having Freddy Krueger at the wheel signified the victory of his evil over the powers of good, a concept he couldn't abide by. At best, the ending of Craven's film is ambiguous and the fate of the screaming teens is never determined. (In fact, the heroine, Heather Langenkamp, returned for some more Kruegerizing in NIGHTMARE 3.) Craven had no idea what was about to happen to his small-budget creation. Shaye put NIGHTMARE 2 into production without Craven's input. And Shaye got some minor revenge against Craven.

"I didn't like the second script," Craven said. "I thought it was a silly script. There was not a clear-cut hero who remained intact. Freddy coming

out of [the hero] really violated the viewers' ability to identify with him. I suggested they make the girl across the street the hero. I thought it would have been much wiser to make her the central character. I also thought they brought Freddy much too much into the realm of reality and put him in situations in daylight where he was diminished. You want Freddy to be always threatening and overpowering. But when he's running around a swimming pool with a bunch of teenagers who are all bigger than he is, he starts to look really silly.

"There were a lot of events in the picture that I felt were just disconnected and had no real reason for being there," continued Craven. "There were characters in the story making really asinine conclusions. There was a thing where a canary goes crazy, dives at them and blows up and somebody says, 'It must have been a gas burner left on.' That sort of thing left no logical trail for me to follow. The capper was that Bob Shaye, who had always wanted me to have Freddy at the wheel of the car at the end of my film, put it in NIGHTMARE 2. Sure enough, Freddy's driving the bus at the end. So, I didn't feel the film represented my vision."

Craven and Wagner came back on board for NIGHTMARE 3. The experience only further alienated the artist from any further association with the film series. "I came up with the idea for NIGHTMARE 3 and co-wrote it with Bruce Wagner," Craven said. "I took an executive producing credit. My understanding was that I would be asked about things all along. I would be brought into the casting and have a real creative part in the picture. The reality was that New Line Cinema never really contacted me after they had the script. They changed it quite drastically in some ways. The director and a friend of his rewrote it and changed the names of all the characters and



Down in the boiler room: Englund as the darker, more frightening Freddy Krueger from Craven's original, which featured a grislier makeup designed by David Miller.

rewrote several key scenes of their own so they could get equal credit on the billing and equal points [in the profits]. A lot of reasons I agreed to do the picture were taken away."

Perhaps the strangest aspect of the NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET phenomenon is how moviegoers, mostly young people, have accepted Freddy Krueger as a true celebrity, a pizza-faced killer that people love to hate. The character made a star out of classically trained actor Robert Englund, who undergoes four hours of makeup each time he plays the deformed razor-blade freak. "Freddy" is in hot demand for personal appearances. The most popular costume in America last Halloween was a Freddy disguise, complete with plastic razors attached to a glove. In January, a new novelty rock album, *Freddy's Greatest Hits* was released. It featured such brain-dead tracks as "Do the Freddy" and "Down in the Boiler Room."

Even Craven admits to being astonished by the mainstream acceptance of a character whose claim to fame was raping, killing, and burning the bodies of children. "I just felt that Freddy was the para-

digm of the threatening adult," Craven said. "Freddy stood for the savage side of male adulthood. He was the ultimate bad father. It's a sickness where youth is hated. Childhood and innocence is hated. And it's attacked and exploited and he tries to snuff it out. From the very beginning, that's how I saw him. He's the most evil human being you can imagine, someone who goes after children."

Craven credits Freddy Krueger's incredible success directly to Shaye, who now owns all legal rights to the character and can do virtually whatever he sees fit with it. "Part of Shaye's genius in marketing was to soften Freddy and make him a little bit more of a buffoon," said Craven. "Now in a sense, he's embraced by younger kids. And they can make fun of him. In a way he's dangerous and in a way he's a joke. It's probably safer to deal with him that way. In his first incarnation, he was just terrifying. I'm sure they'll make seven or eight movies. They'll make as many as they can. As business people, why not? That's obviously allowed them to expand the company and make other movies. That's the business side of making movies. It's called a franchise.

"I know Bob [Shaye] always had the feeling that there should be more humor in the movies," continued Craven. "He thought the first one was too dark a vision. His idea is that kids want to laugh and have a good time. It's not a secret that he talks about this kind of movie as 'a good cheeseburger.' It should be a formula that you determine and you crank them out and kids go to them like a fast food. But I don't think that way, which Bob Shaye would call a darker, less humorous way. I would call it more important and serious."

One of the most unusual things about Craven is how he gets creative inspiration from dreams. Craven credits his own nightmares to be the basis for THE HILLS HAVE EYES (1977) and scenes in DEADLY BLESSING (1981) and THE SERPENT AND THE RAINBOW, his most recent film which was a hit for Universal earlier this year. The key to Craven's success at tapping into his own psyche began in college when he wrote a research paper on dreaming. Part of the project required Craven to record his own dreams. He became rather proficient at it.

"In the course of that semester, I got better and better at it," he said. "I was recalling four to five to six dreams a night. I would spend a lot of time during the day just writing them down. By the end of that semester I stopped, but I retained the facility to recall my dreams. It's difficult for everybody, unless you start doing it. Once you start, your mind becomes adapted to it. The trick is that

we all can do it. We all remember our dreams during a flash period just after we wake and just before we have a cup of coffee. If you write down the bare bones of the dream, the chances are that you can write it all down."

Besides inspiration, dreams play an important role in all of Craven's films, especially in A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET. "The cinema lends itself to dreaming," said Craven. "It is in a sense a dream itself. People go into a dark room very much like a bedroom. They see phantasmic images on a screen that aren't really there, it's part and parcel of dreams."

"I think horror films serve the same function that nightmares serve in the human consciousness," continued Craven. "They are a vent for disturbing, but very powerful and important thoughts. I call them boot camp for the psyche, especially for young people. I think films process very powerful primal fears and trepidations. Teenagers see things very clearly, sometimes frighteningly clearly. They're going through a process of reevaluating their country, their mother and father, looking at their youth and seeing that they're about to be adults, deciding what to do about sex and drugs, what to do with lives and careers, it's a tremendous mine-field in their lives."

"Horror films are a playing out of some of those things on a very primal level. It's life and death, blood and guts. But people come out of it at the end. There's a sense of exhilaration. They survive." □

Craven said NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 2 (1985) diminished Freddy by putting him in everyday situations, threatening Mark Patton, who looks bigger.



# NEW LINE CINEMA ON WORKING WITH WES CRAVEN

*New Line execs Bob Shaye and Sara Risher tell their side and reminisce about the making of the film that started it all.*

By Frederick S. Clarke

New Line CEO Bob Shaye and Sara Risher, president in charge of production, both expressed shock and dismay at director Wes Craven's remarks about why he's leaving the NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET series behind. "I'm sorry the relationship has turned to one of animosity," said Risher, who is co-producing the new film in the series, based in L.A. "I think Craven's recollections are faulty and I'll be happy to set the record straight."

"I'm always astounded when things like this from Craven get back to me," said Shaye, who once responded with a letter [17:3/4:126] to remarks Craven made about the reasons he wasn't involved in A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 2: FREDDY'S REVENGE [17:2:6]. "When I see Craven it's always kind of cordial. And he has an ongoing profit participation in the series."

That's right. Craven will make money from A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET IV: THE DREAMMASTER, even though he had nothing to do with it. "It's a big financial participation as a result of his contracts on the first and third film," said Risher, who declined to be more specific.

Though Shaye and Risher affirmed that, indeed, Craven was approached to rewrite William Kotzwinkle's script for PART IV: THE DREAMMASTER, they fail to see why Craven was offended by the offer. "When the script we had didn't work I went to Wes [Craven] and Bruce [Wagner] to see about rewriting it and directing it," said Risher. "He [Craven] didn't respond to me, personally. He had his assistant call me to say he wouldn't do it. He was too busy." At the time, Craven was reshooting scenes for his Universal release, THE SERPENT AND THE RAINBOW.

"Initially, I approached Wes for an idea for the fourth film," said Risher. "I always go to Wes first each time. His idea was illog-



Bob Shaye (center), chief executive of New Line Cinema with president Sara Risher and Jack Sholder, director of NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 2.

ical. It was about time travel within dreams that broke all the rules of dreams. We decided not to go with that. When we decided to go with Kotzwinkle's 'Dreammaster' idea, which we thought was terrific, I told Wes we were doing that."

Shaye confirmed that Craven had been approached first on the new sequel. "He, Sara [Risher] and I had a conference call together," said Shaye about the time travel idea Craven pitched for Part 4. "I told him I thought it was kind of interesting and that I'd get back to him. After a lot of discussion, it was decided his idea didn't really have the impact we were looking for. Ultimately, we felt it wasn't workable. We had to make a producer's creative decision about whether we wanted to go ahead with his idea and we decided not to. I think Sara [Risher] sent him a copy of Kotzwinkle's script afterwards as a courtesy."

Shaye said he thinks he understands why Craven is unhappy with the way his and Bruce Wagner's script for A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 3: DREAM WARRIORS was changed. "They thought they had it nailed," said Shaye. "We thought it needed more work.

But there was never any acrimony as far as I know. And I think the tremendous success of the film speaks for itself."

Risher is less sanguine and diplomatic. "I don't understand why he [Craven] doesn't give credit where credit is due," said Risher. "Chuck Russell made the script [for Part 3] work. I give Wes the complete credit for the terrific idea of these kids—the Dream Warriors—I'm not faulting that. But Chuck Russell and Frank Darabont turned that script around. We wouldn't have made it with what we had [from Craven]. They [Russell and Darabont] rewrote 70% of it." Risher added that Craven had also been offered the chance to direct Part 3. "He thought he was going to get SUPERMAN IV and turned it down," she said.

Shaye denied that he ever referred to the Elm Street films as "a good cheeseburger." "That's a misquote," said Shaye. "We do think the films should be 'date movies,' and that they should be entertaining. I may have talked at some juncture about the idea of popular entertainment being more a 'fast food' kind of entertainment, as opposed to film as 'art.'"

But Shaye emphasized that he

doesn't shy away from film as art, citing PRINCE OF PENNSYLVANIA, which Ron Nyswaner just finished writing and directing for New Line. "It's his vision and his ideas," said Shaye, who added that, as a producer and distributor, he's been involved with more art films than Craven. "There's a big difference between being a producer and a financier," said Shaye. "We are not financiers at New Line. We are producers. The team that we assemble is generally one that has a mutual and common respect for each other, not only in the specific functions they perform, but in the overall creative point of view that they bring to the table."

Risher said she couldn't believe that Craven was still grousing about the ending of the first film. "A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET was a collaborative effort," said Risher, who co-produced the original film. According to Risher, Craven spent a full year rewriting the script with input from New Line. And she and Bob Shaye spent days in the editing room, putting the film together. "There was never an ending in the script," said Risher. "The sky turned black. Lots of birds came out. It was apocalyptic. Wes [Craven] came up with the ending that's on it and he shot it. He also shot the ending Bob [Shaye] wanted—Freddy driving the car. Both of them looked at the footage and it was agreed to use Craven's ending—Freddy pulling Heather's mom through the door. Bob's ending isn't there."

Concluded Shaye, about New Line's approach to filmmaking, "Films very much are the creative children of a real complicated, complex gene pool that comes from the writer and the director and the producer and the editor and the director of photography and the actors. All of those people bring their own stamp to a film. Any belief in auteur filmmaking, I think, does a disservice to the process because it's too hermetic and way too inbred." □

# COMING

## PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

Andrew Lloyd Webber forgot one thing: to credit Gaston Leroux.

By Frederick S. Clarke

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA is now a hit on Broadway. The Andrew Lloyd Webber musical managed to live up to its publicity when it opened in January dispelling critical barbs and selling out performances at \$50 a ticket. The show has grossed over \$12 million and brings in over \$500,000 a week to sold-out crowds at New York's Majestic theatre, making it the biggest hit in Broadway history.

But there's a fly in the ointment. Bill O'Connell, who works as a movie publicist in New York, noticed something strange about the show's playbill when he attended a performance—there was no credit given to Gaston Leroux, French author of the original novel on which the play is based.

O'Connell formed a coalition of writers and literary organizations to demand that official recognition be given to Leroux, calling the oversight "an outrage." Joining in the protest, which generated some negative publicity for the show, were The Authors Guild, The Dramatists Guild, PEN, The Mystery Writers of America, Kurt Vonnegut, Isaac Asimov, E.L. Doctorow, Harlan Ellison, and Ray Bradbury. The demand for credit was sent to Cameron Mackintosh and Andrew Lloyd Webber, producers of the show, which has been running in London for over a year, and recently opened in Tokyo.

O'Connell went public with his efforts in April to bring pressure to bear on Webber and Mackintosh when polite, behind-the-scenes maneuvers were rebuffed. O'Connell said he originally wrote the production on February 8th. Five weeks later O'Connell said he got a call from Paul Woerner, attorney for the producers. O'Connell said Woerner told him the production only included credits on the playbill that "were absolutely essential."

*Phantom of the Opera*, a novel published by Leroux in 1911, is in the public domain and is no longer



Michael Crawford stars on Broadway as the Phantom.

protected by copyright. Legally, Webber and Mackintosh had no obligation to mention Leroux at all. But O'Connell and his group felt there was a moral obligation to credit Leroux. And others found the omission of Leroux's name by the production more than just curious. "But what could explain the omission?" wrote Robert Massa in his "Sightlines" column for New York's *Village Voice*. "Only petty egotism," according to Massa, who added, "... it can't be simply an oversight. Broadway credits are negotiated with the kind of fine-tooth combing usually reserved for arms treaties."

In his efforts, O'Connell said that he located Patrick Leroux, French grandson of the novelist, and advised him of the situation. Mr. Leroux brought the matter to the Societe des Auteurs in Paris. Potential action by the Societe could award damages and delay any planned Paris production of the musical because in France, as in other Berne convention countries, authors' rights are more stringently protected, morally as well as legally.

The letter O'Connell's group sent to Mackintosh and Webber stated that the omission of

Leroux's name from credits for the Broadway production "left many in the international literary community bewildered. A writer's association with his work should not be diminished by time. It is Gaston Leroux who brought forth *Phantom of the Opera* and he must be accorded a proper credit as author of the original novel."

This time, O'Connell's protest received a more prompt response in the form of a letter hand-delivered April 19th, from attorney Woerner, acceding to the group's demand. According to Woerner's letter, "It had never been their intention... to fail to give appropriate prominence to the contribution of M. Leroux." Woerner went on to cite the fact that George Perry's book *The Complete Phantom of the Opera*, part of the play's merchandising effort, "dedicates a full chapter to M. Leroux and his development of the piece," and that the novel being reprinted by Harper & Row was licensed to use the play's artwork and logo.

O'Connell found the Webber and Mackintosh *mea culpa* delivered by the attorney less than sincere. "What's funny about their letter is that they cite the fact that Gaston Leroux is mentioned in the \$25 coffee table book on 'Phantom,'" said O'Connell. "They certainly aren't giving that out to everyone that goes to see the show!" O'Connell also failed to see how a licensing deal on the novel's reprint showed any good will toward Leroux. "The royalties from their 'mask' logo that they allowed Harper & Row to use on the paperback tie-in goes to the production," said O'Connell. "Not one cent goes to the author's estate."

The new credit is to read "Inspired by the novel by Gaston Leroux." But that didn't satisfy O'Connell, who termed the wording "unacceptably weak." Webber's play, according to O'Connell wasn't inspired, it was "based on" Leroux's book. □

## BIG TOP PEE WEE

BOSS FILM EFFECTS IN ANOTHER PEE WEE HERMAN FANTASY

Paramount Pictures opens BIG TOP PEE WEE on July 15, the followup to Warner Bros' highly successful PEE WEE'S BIG ADVENTURE, directed by Tim Burton in 1985. Paul Reubens returns in his Pee Wee guise and also acts as co-writer and co-producer. Directing is Randal Kleiser, who made FLIGHT OF THE NAVIGATOR.

Special effects for the elaborate fantasy were done by Richard Edlund's Boss Film, including shots of a circus whisked up by a tornado and deposited on Pee Wee's farm, a scene right out of THE WIZARD OF OZ which gets the plot rolling.

Herman plays a farmer whose romance with schoolteacher Penelope Ann Miller (BILOXI BLUES) turns into a love triangle when he falls for dazzling circus star Valeria Golino, a 21 year-old Italian actress. Kris Kristofferson plays dashing circus ringmaster Mace Montana.

Reubens created the Pee Wee Herman character while a member of the improvisational group The Groundlings. After the success of his first feature, which earned more than \$18 million domestically, Reubens created the Emmy-winning PEE WEE'S PLAYHOUSE for Saturday morning TV. Reubens wrote the new film with George McGrath, a former Groundlings member who also collaborated with him on writing the TV series.

Vance the talking pig co-stars with Paul Reubens as Pee Wee.



By Steve Biodrowski

It creeps and leaps, and slides and glides . . . again!

That's right: **THE BLOB**, one of the most truly unique and original of '50s sci-fi monsters, is being brought out of retirement to star in a lavish remake of the original Jack H. Harris production. Although the original film is noteworthy for featuring Steve McQueen in his first starring role, its greatest claim to fame lies in its title character. Let's face it, the Blob has become a part of our popular consciousness in a way similar to Dracula and Frankenstein; that is, whether you have not seen the film in years or never saw it at all, you know what the Blob is—quite an achievement when you consider that the film has no literary or mythical antecedents to compare with the majority of filmic monsters.

The new version is the brainchild of director Chuck Russell (**NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET III**), who like many of us first discovered the original on television as a child: "Everyone else in the '50s was making movies about aliens that were smart enough to build flying saucers and all they really wanted to do was kill teenagers when they got to Earth," said Russell. "But Jack Harris and his people had a film with a really *alien* creature. They hit on something that struck a primal chord: this thing that's relentless and predatory; you can't reason with it, and you can't get away from it. There's something about the primal simplicity of this creeping, crawling thing that can slide under your door and squeeze through the heating vent that blew a lot of people's minds as a kid. It was a very effective film in its day, and it's a wonderful archetype for classic monster movies."

Russell caught the ending of the film on television two years ago and was "hit by lightning" with the idea of doing a remake. A copyright search led to Jack H. Harris, where Russell discovered that after 1972's **BEWARE THE BLOB!** (a comedy-sequel also known as **SON OF BLOB**) there had been a couple of aborted attempts at doing

a contemporary remake. Fortunately for Russell, his enthusiasm for the project won Harris over, who agreed to give Russell his chance at getting the film off the ground.

Russell and Frank Darabont wrote a first draft at New World, but the project got stalled. Russell and Darabont then collaborated on rewriting the script for **A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET III**, which Russell directed. The success of that film helped clinch the deal to make **THE BLOB**, now with Tri-Star distributing. They plan to open the film August 19.

Although **THE BLOB** may appear to be just another part of the continuing trend in remaking '50s science fiction films (**INVADERS FROM MARS**, **THE FLY**, **NOT OF THIS EARTH**), Russell actually had the property together before he was aware of the remake of **THE FLY**. "It was all sewn up and being written when **THE**

## Director Chuck Russell revives a '50s horror icon with effects for the '80s.



Shawnee Smith (l) and Kevin Dillon (Matt's brother) stand off **THE BLOB** in the remake, to be released by Tri-Star August 19. Believe it or not, Smith essays the role played by the late Steve McQueen in the original, which was filmed in 1958.

**FLY** came out," he said. "But I think the Cronenberg success made it a hotter property in the traditional Hollywood fashion." Regarding the other remakes, Russell said he is of the school of thought that, if you have nothing to add, then you shouldn't do it. "I wouldn't have touched **KING KONG**—that's a picture I love. **THE FLY** was such a departure from the original that I was really impressed—they had the guts not to have the scene with the guy going 'Help me!'"

The new version of **THE BLOB** began shooting on January 12, 1988, with Rupert Harvey line-producing while Harris took on a sort of figure-head role. Newcomer Shawnee Smith stars as a cheerleader who is an approximation of the Steve McQueen character in the original; co-starring is Kevin Dillon (**PLATOON**, Vista's direct to video **REMOTE CONTROL**). The blob is being designed, in life-size and miniature versions, by Lyle Conway. Miniatures of a besieged town were created by Greg Jein (1941). Optical work is being provided by Dreamquest Images, under the supervision of Hoyt Yeatman. Makeup for the Blob's victims, which will appear in both full scale and

miniature, is being supervised by Tony Gardner (**RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD**).

After three weeks on location in Abbeville, Louisiana, the production moved to Los Angeles for another three and a half weeks of exterior locations, then settled into sound stages in Valencia, near Magic Mountain (a popular place with genre filmmakers recently, including **WAXWORK** and **RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD II**, apparently because the rent is so much less than in downtown Hollywood).

Tri-Star is eager to keep the appearance of the new Blob under wraps, but at the same time they are eager to insist that it is quite different from the original. This Blob is more of an organism, almost like an amoeba, that can sprout tentacles to grab its victims. A variety of effects techniques will be employed, including stop- and go-

continued on page 56

# OUT OF THE DARK

Paul Bartel sends up Brian DePalma imitating Alfred Hitchcock.

By Todd French

Zel Films' *OUT OF THE DARK* is a murder mystery set in the sleazy world of L.A. phone sex, featuring an off-beat eclectic cast headed by Karen Black, and containing what the filmmakers hope is the seedy quirkiness which is the trademark of genre icons Brian De Palma and, to a greater degree, Paul Bartel, who is the film's executive producer and stars in a minor role. The modestly budgeted (\$1.6 million) Cinetel Films release not only bears Bartel's signature odd-ball sensibilities but reunites three of the principals from Bartel's '85 western spoof, *LUST IN THE DUST*. The film, which finished a tight shooting schedule on L.A. locations January 6th, is scheduled for release in September, and includes the last screen appearance of Divine, who died unexpectedly of heart failure in March at the age of 46.

The story of *OUT OF THE DARK* revolves around a psychopathic killer who is stalking a series of pretty, struggling actresses/models who are earning their living as "telephone escorts" for Black's audio-sex company, "Suite Nothings." Among the suspects are a photographer (Cameron Dye, Nicholas Cage's buddy from *VALLEY GIRL*) who dates one of the company's employees, and a nerdy, repressed accountant (*HAROLD AND MAUDE*'s Bud Cort) who works in the same building as the girls, and always yearns for the women beyond his reach. Round the rest of this mayhem off with the looney tunes casting which includes Tracey Walters (*REPO MAN*) as a rumpled detective on the case, and cameos by *LUST IN THE DUST* alumni Tab Hunter, Bartel, Divine and Lainie Kazan (filling in a bit part originally written for Nancy Allen in another De Palma homage) and you have an idea of the combination of yocks and grue which *OUT OF THE DARK* is striving for. Divine plays a detective named "Langella," called in to help solve the eerie series of slayings.

Termed a "lurid, urban crime drama" by producer Zane Levitt,



Divine as the film's Hitchcock look-alike detective.

who penned the script with associate producer J. Gregory De Felice, *OUT OF THE DARK*'s inception came about after Levitt decided to capitalize on the 976# craze in a thriller plot (in fact, at one point the script was entitled *976-KILL*, a title too close to Cinetel's own production *976-EVIL*, see 18:4:14). Levitt, a former San Francisco Art Institute student and avowed Roger Corman fan who has also served as an assistant to Bartel, feels the movie "is an unconventional horror film with some very dark stuff. Greg [co-writer De Felice] and I were inspired by Brian De Palma to make a lurid murder mystery and sexy whodunit which utilizes a lot of his sex symbolism."

If De Palma's individual stamp is on the film's plot with its not-so-innocent heroines being messily pruned by a maniacal killer, then Bartel's spirit absolutely pervades it. In fact, *OUT OF THE DARK* could conceivably be called a Paul Bartel Reunion flick. Along with Levitt and cast members, *OUT OF THE DARK* director Michael Schroeder (coming off another Zel production, *MORTUARY ACADEMY*, now in release and also featuring Tracey Walters and Bud Cort, see page 20) has also served as an assistant director for

Bartel in the past.

Schroeder also handled first assistant director chores on last year's smash thriller, *THE BIG EASY*, and directed the "Secret Cinema" episode for Steven Spielberg's television anthology, *AMAZING STORIES*. *OUT OF THE DARK* is Schroeder's second feature.

The balance of both the movie's humor and horror (which could easily cancel each other out if not handled deftly) will depend a great deal on the audience's reaction to the movie's psychopathic killer, "Bobo," who... well... er... is a clown, and not only that, but a street mime! But Levitt believes that moviegoers will not have their screams choked due to unintentional laughter. Said Levitt, "Bobo is an icon of badness who kills with a very sick sense of humor."

An example of this sort of blend of nastiness and hilarity is the way in which Levitt and De Felice's script will follow a gruesome segment in which an escort gets clubbed to death with a Louisville slugger intercut with another in which an interviewee for Black's company tries to impress the latter by telling her that her credits include the voice of "Ookla the Mok" in a Saturday morning cartoon.

Another way in which Levitt and Schroeder hope to keep genre fans off their guard is the manner in which *OUT OF THE DARK* is being scored, by playing a delicate three-string piece during scenes of on-screen violence while underscoring more conventional ones with standard menacing genre motifs. "We really want to make people relax before we hit them," explained Levitt.

Levitt credits mentor Paul Bartel with giving him his first break in show business in 1985. In *OUT OF THE DARK*, Bartel, the creator, writer and star of the quirky black comedy *EATING RAOUL* (12:2:9), plays a motel clerk who discovers one of Bobo's victims, in a comedy cameo. Tab Hunter's small bit is as the driver of a speeding car that has a run-in with Cort. The film also features Karen Witter, Playboy's 1982 Miss March, as Bobo's first victim. □

## VIBES

LOOK OUT INDIANA JONES, HERE COMES CYNDI LAUPER!

Nothing less than the ultimate energy source in the Universe is the goal of Cyndi Lauper, Jeff Goldblum, and Peter Falk in *VIBES*, a comedy/adventure from Columbia Pictures due to hit theatres in August. Ron Howard, whose *WILLOW* opened in May, served as executive producer for his Imagine Films company. Columbia is not shy that the film is in the spirit of blockbusters like *RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK* and *ROMANCING THE STONE*.

Goldblum and Lauper play a pair of mismatched psychics on the trail of pyramid power in Peru. Goldblum is a psychometrist who can tell everything about an object by touching it. Pop singer Cyndi Lauper, in her film debut, is a transmedium with a link to the spirit world. The pair are drawn into a wild south American adventure by Falk, who offers them



Lauper discovers pyramid power.

\$50,000 to find his missing son. The quest leads to a hidden temple, a gang of killers and a secret lost for 50,000 years.

Ken Kwapis, who put the *Sesame Street* Gang through their paces in *FOLLOW THAT BIRD*, directs the film from a screenplay by Lowell Ganz and Babaloo Mandell. Ganz and Mandell had previously teamed with Howard on *SPLASH*, *SPIES LIKE US*, and *GUNG-HO*. The film's special effects are by Richard Edlund's Boss Films. **Dan Scapperotti**

# FRIGHT NIGHT 2

**John Carpenter protege Tommy Lee Wallace on directing a sequel to 1985's comedy shocker.**

By *Steven Jongeward*

A thick fog curls over the floor of the soundstage, caressing the feet of the camera crew, and swirls over weed-shrouded tombstones, engulfing a coffin perched at the center of a graveyard set. With an eerie creaking, the top of the casket begins to open. A hand appears—then the whole of a familiar character begins to speak. "Good evening," intones Roddy McDowall as Peter Vincent—evangelist of B-horror movies. "And welcome to FRIGHT NIGHT."

Or more appropriately, welcome to FRIGHT NIGHT—PART 2, the sequel. The set is located at Global Studios, in what is known as "Old Hollywood," which served as home for the production late last year. McDowall returns as B-film horror star and movie host turned reluctant vampire killer for another occult adventure with hapless teenage fan Charlie Brewster, again played by William Ragsdale. New Centu-



The film's climactic transformation, designed by Bart Mixon as Regine transforms into a flying bat.

ry/Vista plans to open the sequel nationwide this Fall. When original FRIGHT NIGHT writer/director Tom Holland bowed out of the project due to other commitments, producer Herb Jaffe hired Tommy Lee Wallace, who got into filmmaking on the heels of his grade school chum John Carpenter. "I started at the University of Southern California about the time John [Carpenter] was getting out," reflected Wallace. "I assisted [Carpenter] on some of his

early features. My art direction background grew out of assisting Dan O'Bannon on DARK STAR. Shortly after that, [Carpenter] invited me to be art director on ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13. I also created sound effects and cut some action sequences. Later I was art director and production designer on HALLOWEEN."

After an unsuccessful and critically panned directing debut on the Carpenter-produced HALLOWEEN III—THE SEASON OF THE WITCH, Wallace performed second unit directing chores for Carpenter on BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA. When not writing scripts for Carpenter's newly-formed production company, Wallace can be found rounding out a singing trio with fellow filmmakers Carpenter and Nick Castle (THE BOY WHO COULD FLY), another Carpenter protege who played the masked killer in HALLOWEEN.

"FRIGHT NIGHT 2 is a little more arch than the first one," said Wallace, who collaborated on the script with

Tim Metcalfe and Miguel Tejada Flores. "That's a dangerous area to get into because of the charm of the first film. I haven't gone into this sequel with any intention of wiping out the qualities that made the first film so accessible. It had a kind of funky high school mentality running through it, which I love and adore. I've tried to retain all of those qualities as I've pushed the scale up."

To get away from the first film, Wallace and his co-authors decided

to make the sequel's vampire menace feminine. "The [Chris Sarandon] character from the first film is a hard act to follow," said Wallace. Julie Carmen, the star of Robert Redford's THE MILAGRO BEANFIELD WAR, plays Regine, *continued on page 59*

Julie Carmen as the vampire, showing the effect of the sun's rays, a gelatin makeup by Mixon and Jim McLoughlin.



Bart Mixon supervised the creature shop at Fantasy II, which built the film's flying vampire creature as a stop-motion puppet, shown being painted by Aaron Sims.



# SPACE AVENGER

Colorful low-budgeter boasts real Technicolor from Beijing Labs.

By Frank Santopadre

"SPACE AVENGER is based on actual alien-terrorist sightings in Manhattan's Greenwich Village," deadpanned writer/director Richard Haines. A veteran director of such Troma fare as *TOXIC AVENGER* and *CLASS OF NUKE 'EM HIGH*, Haines believes that fans of "sci-fi/splatter" will find the film to be fun, if not believable. Haines said he planned to open the film theatrically in May.

The film's storyline involves a belligerent band of other-worldly fugitives who crash-land on Earth, circa 1938. Needing advanced technology to refuel their ship, they are hindered by Earth's primitive know-how, forcing them to hibernate underground until certain scientific advancements are made. Having lain dormant for fifty years, they eventually surface in New York City in the year 1988 (turning up in a trendy underground disco, of all places). While rampaging through the city, they find themselves being pursued by an adventure-seeking comic book illustrator and his girlfriend, who begin to draw upon actual confrontations for fresh story ideas.

An alien regenerates itself from its own severed arm, a makeup effect designed by John Bisson and Ralph Cirella.



Director Richard Haines with space pod and planet models.

The aliens have the ability to regenerate their bodies at will. Whenever someone tries to slow them down by shooting off an arm or leg, they just shake it off and grow another one. This plot device provided more than enough work for makeup and effects supervisors John Bisson and Ralph Cirella (*ENEMY TERRITORY*, *DEAD AND MARRIED*), who were busy creating severed limbs and appendages to suit just about every occasion.

"The film contains quite a bit of dark humor," said Haines, citing a scene in which one of the aliens courts disaster by attempting to regenerate while intoxicated, causing a hand to grow from the remains of a severed foot. In another humorous aside, veteran adult film star Jamie Gillis puts the make on an alien temptress, but ends up being burned alive for his efforts, as she proves to be a bit too passionate.

In addition to the comedic element, one of the appeals for Haines and producers Bob Harris and Ray Sundli (*MOTHER'S DAY*, *THE LORDS OF FLATBUSH*) was the creative challenge that the film's 1930s sequences presented. "We loved the idea of using 3-strip Technicolor for the '30s segments," said Haines, a film archivist and collector who is no stranger to the process. "Printing stocks for features today are pretty poor," complained Haines. "There is no real richness, and the colors

tend to appear washed-out and dreary."

For *SPACE AVENGER*, color coordinator Juan Cobo was employed (unusual for a contemporary film) in order to achieve a balance between the saturated '30s sequences and a glossier, rock-video style for the contemporary scenes. In addition, producer Sundlin, cinematographer Mustafa Barat and art director Linda Schubell-Sundlin screened several classic Technicolor prints (*SPARTACUS*, *VERTIGO*, etc.) in order to acquaint themselves with the "look" they wanted.

"To produce a film that will survive the years and maintain richness and proper color," explained Sundlin, "steps must be taken from the very start of principal photography." As further proof of their dedication, Haines and associate producer Frank Calo contacted Beijing Labs in China ("the only film lab in the world still equipped for it," they said) where negotiations are underway for the processing of dye-transfer, 3-strip color release prints of *SPACE AVENGER*.

In an additional nostalgic gesture, the filmmakers handed the lead role of the ambitious comic book artist to a young actor named Kirk Fairbanks Fogg, a direct descendant of (have you guessed?) legendary swashbuckler Douglas Fairbanks. Completing a somewhat eclectic cast are *TOXIC AVENGER* star Robert Prichard and newcomer Gina Mastrogia-como (a Martin Scorsese protege, no less). "I'm a shameless film buff," confessed Haines, who sees himself as an embodiment of "the total filmmaker," one who assumes an active role in nearly every aspect of production: writing, editing, even creating his own trailers. "Whenever I'm presented with the opportunity to toss in a bit of trivia or an obvious film 'in-joke,' I usually jump at it," he said.

But what of Haines' curious claim that *SPACE AVENGER* is in fact based on actual alien sightings? "Not hard to believe at all," he assured. "We are talking about New York City, don't forget." □

## A SWITCH IN TIME

TIME TRAVELERS TO ANCIENT ROME IN COMEDY ADVENTURE

*A SWITCH IN TIME* is a new film from Canadian director Paul Donovan (*DEFCON 4*), backed by Toronto-based Simcom, Int., the makers of *HELLO MARY LOU: PROM NIGHT II*. Originally titled *NORMANICUS (17:2:14)*, Donovan's film is a comedy/adventure about a physicist named Norman whose time travel experiments see him stranded in ancient Rome.

Simcom's west coast representative, Jim Slater, said the Goldwyn Company, which picked up *PROM NIGHT II* last year for a hefty \$5 million, has passed on releasing the film. Slater said Simcom expects to make a distribution deal with another indie company on *A SWITCH IN*



Norman meets a Roman legionaire.

*TIME* at the Cannes Film Market in May that will see the film in theatres by August.

The film's scientist hero is propelled back in time due to an accident at the cyclotron in Geneva, Switzerland, the world's largest nuclear accelerator. With a beautiful British model and a rich Brazilian playboy at his side, the group finds themselves still on the same spot in Switzerland, only the year is 60 A.D., during the reign of Nero.

"Using 20th century knowledge, they set up their own petty kingdom or dictatorship, eventually finding themselves in trouble with the Roman army," said Donovan, whose Salter Street Films company shot the large scale production in Argentina.

Gary Kimber





# Ella

## The auteur of NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD on his latest horror from Orion.

By Frederick C. Szabin

It's been 20 years since George Romero's NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD changed the shape of horror films with its uncompromising storyline and graphic violence. Since that low budget effort's birth in Samreny's Restaurant on Pittsburgh's Market Street, Romero has established himself as a versatile filmmaker who can lead his audience from the quiet chills of MARTIN (1978), to the numbing shock and sharp satire of DAWN OF THE DEAD (1979).

ELLA, Romero's latest film and his first since DAY OF THE DEAD (1985), lets him shed the trademark ghouls and delve into the more subtle horrors of a troubled mind. Originally titled MONKEYSHINES, Orion Pictures plans to release the film July 15. "It was a Jekyll and Hyde story I liked right away," said Romero. "I have always dealt with good and evil

as being ill-defined forces. I guess that's what attracted me to this story. There are no characters that are clearly doing the wrong thing. There is only bad timing, as the main character discovers the evil within himself. The script offered a way of dealing with this theme in a very direct way, in what I feel is a believable context."

Based on British author Michael Stewart's novel, the film follows the trials of Allan Mann, a promising college runner whose Olympic future is cut short when a motorcycle accident leaves him a quadriplegic, unable to move from the neck down. Over the next several months, Allan becomes increasingly despondent, then suicidal. A scientist friend offers new hope with Ella, a specially trained and genetically altered capuchin monkey who will help Allan by becoming an extension of his immobile body. Her basic tasks are to fetch things, groom and feed

Jason Beghe stars as a quadriplegic who is menaced by his Capuchin monkey helpmate in ELLA, formerly called MONKEY SHINES, which opens nationally July 15.



Romero relaxes on the set with Boo, the simian star who plays ELLA.

Allan. But as a result of the scientist's experiment, Allan begins to experience movement through Ella's senses when the two form a psychic bond. As the bond becomes stronger, so does Allan's love and dependence on Ella. Slowly, he realizes that Ella has tapped into his mind, sensing his frustration with those who have hurt him. Suddenly, those people begin to turn up dead and Allan finds himself not only in Ella's care, but under her control.

In the three years since DAY OF THE DEAD, Romero's name has been associated with a number of film projects (see 18:42), but ELLA was the first one to gel. "It came together very quickly," said Romero. "The Charles Evans Company acquired the book and a friend of mine there, Jerry Canessa, immediately thought of me. In adapting it, I had the benefit of a screenplay draft the author had written. With that, I committed the sin everyone blames the studios for—I just took the things I liked and wrote the script without any conscience or pangs of guilt. I altered some story points and characters, but I really feel I didn't change the author's intention. We'll see how Michael [Stewart] feels when he sees the movie. He read the script and seemed to

like it. We're still friends."

As in the film, the Boston-based project Helping Hands places trained monkeys in homes with quadriplegics to help around the house and assist with basic daily chores that mobile people take for granted. The organization supplied all but a few of the background simians for filming and representative Alison Pasco served as the production's head trainer. Because the movie's plot deals with a monkey becoming dangerous to its quadriplegic owner, Helping Hands expressed concern initially that it might result in adverse publicity.

"That fear didn't last very long," said Romero. "There is really nothing in the film that is adverse to their operation. Ella is a Frankenstein. She has been genetically tampered with. There is nothing negative about the program or the idea of putting a monkey in a home with a quad. In fact, if the film is successful, it could wind up helping them by bringing attention to the Helping Hands program."

Working with temperamental simians when trying to film on a tight schedule and a lean budget did not provide the relaxed set Romero is used to. He admitted with a noticeable sigh that ELLA has been the

continued on page 56



# HELL COMES TO FROGTOWN

## How too many New World execs stuck their fingers in the video production pie.

By Steve Biodrowski

New World Pictures has come a long way since Roger Corman sold the company. It puts out more films and spends more money on them, but in attempting to compete with the major studios, it has become a bit like them, perhaps losing some of its independence. Gone are the good old days when, according to the classic story, Corman would have a meeting with a director starting a film and, instead of discussing camera placement and

Wrestler Rowdy Roddy Piper as Sam Hellmond and Sandahl Bergman in New World's campaign for its video release.



plot, would simply give the title, budget, schedule, and the requirements for nudity and violence to get an exploitable R-rating, then tell the director to go do the film. Today, everybody has a finger in the pie, as producer/director Donald G. Jackson found out during the making of HELL COMES TO FROGTOWN.

Jackson had directed a \$70,000 16mm direct-to-video feature for New World's video division: ROLLERBLADE, a tale of "futuristic rebel nuns on skates with knives," according to Jackson. On the strength of that project's overseas sales, New World asked him to pitch ideas for another low-budget, direct-to-video feature. Jackson pitched HELL COMES TO FROGTOWN, a tongue-in-cheek post-apocalypse action-adventure story, which he described as "ROAD WARRIOR meets PLANET OF THE APES, except they're frogs."

New World loved the script by Randall Frakes, who was supposed to co-produce the film with Jackson, and agreed to finance the project, which was to be shot 16mm, non-union, for \$150,000.

It was then that the project began to balloon. New World wanted a name in the cast and suggested Sybil Danning for a role intended for Suzanne Solari, who had appeared in ROLLERBLADE. As a bone, Solari was given the small part



Brian Frank as frog commander Toty in an animatronic mask by Steve Wang.

of a nomad girl in the film. Jackson did not think Danning was right for the part, so New World offered it to Sandahl Bergman, who was finishing up a two-picture contract with them. Unfortunately, the casting of Bergman meant that the whole film had to be cast SAG, which immediately raised the budget to \$500,000. New World's video division could not afford that price tag, so the film was moved over to the

feature division where executives questioned whether the script's extensive action and stunt requirements could be achieved for half a million dollars. They rebudgeted the film somewhere between \$750,000 to \$1,000,000.

"Then I got the phone call," said Jackson. "They basically said, 'We're not going to trust you with a million dollars, but here's what we'd like to do,

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Sandahl Bergman is captured by mutant frogs in action filmmaker Donald G. Jackson described as "PLANET OF THE APES meets MAD MAX, except they're frogs."



**THE FLY II**  
MAKEUP MAN CHRIS  
WALAS DIRECTS

Would you believe pretty-boy Eric Stoltz as the son of the Fly? The sequel to the 1986 David Cronenberg hit began shooting in April in Vancouver, with Stoltz as the mutating offspring of Jeff Goldblum. Directing is makeup expert Chris Walas, who created the icky transformation effects for Cronenberg's film.

In the script by brothers Jim and Ken Wheat, Stoltz is being raised by the foundation that funded Goldblum's teleportation experiments. He's five years old but looks like twenty, due to his mixed up genes, when found by a comely lab technician. They must learn the secret of his father's telepod in time to save the day. □

**HALLOWEEN IV**  
ANOTHER SLASHER,  
MINUS CARPENTER

Moustapha Akkad, the Syrian producer who put together the financing for HALLOWEEN, is behind a new entry in the series, which began shooting in Salt Lake City, Utah on April 4 for Akkad's Trancas company. Akkad presented the first three films in the series, all in association with John Carpenter, director of the original, who is not associated with the new sequel.

Ignoring HALLOWEEN III: SEASON OF THE WITCH (except in the numbering), the new sequel picks up the story of bogeyman Michael Myers and brings back Donald Pleasance as Dr. Loomis, the psychiatrist trying to stop him, a character supposedly burned up at the end of HALLOWEEN II. Dwight H. Little directs from a script by Allan B. McElroy.

Though the original was a highly successful independent film that vaulted Carpenter to major league status, the two earlier sequels made by Dino De Laurentiis for Universal Pictures were released to disappointing results, with the third film a continuation of the series in name only. □

**DEATH BY DIALOGUE**

*A direct-to-video low-budgeter made by City Lights Productions.*

By Larry Barsky

DEATH BY DIALOGUE is a direct-to-video feature scheduled for release by City Lights Video in May. "This is our most elaborate and costly movie so far," said City Lights co-owner, Joseph Mehri. "Last year we did 10 films which I wrote, directed and co-produced along with my partner Richard Pepin. We did everything ourselves, even the video box artwork."

According to Mehri, City Lights plans to release 20 movies on video this year. "Our goal is to become a major studio within the next few years," he said. "We want to be what Cannon started out to be, and we've recently gotten some new backing to do just that. But in order to grow, we have to let other people write and direct. We have to bring fresh blood into this business."

Tom DeWier, the director of DEATH BY DIALOGUE, worked as a stunt man on two earlier City Lights productions, FRESH KILL and THE KILLING GAME. Said Mehri, "One day he came to me with a hot script idea and told me he wanted to direct it. I liked it and decided to give him a chance." DeWier's story idea involved a "possessed" movie script. Once uncovered, its blank pages immediately start writing themselves. Demons, gargoyles and assorted undead spew forth from the bowels of the earth to do the script's bidding. A police detective investigating the mayhem is sucked into the ground, melted and spit back. It is left to a bunch of teenagers to find a way to "white-out" the script before a dead motorcyclist demon with a five-foot sabre shish-kabobs everyone in his path.

DeWier has done everything from stunts on HILL STREET BLUES and AMAZING STORIES to doubling for Matthew Broderick and Ralph Macchio. "We're shooting in 16mm film at 30 frames per second, instead of the usual 24, and transferring our neg to video at 30 frames in order to maintain the highest quality possible," he said. "To maintain the highest production values, I've called in some favors and brought in friends who normally wouldn't be able to work for this budget;



First-time director Tom DeWier poses with Taylor Forbes, playing a detective investigating a possessed screenplay who gets turned into a melted gumshoe.

people like Gladstone's Raiders of the Lost Art for stunt set design work, and my very good friend Ken Sagoes to lend support in a starring role."

Sagoes is the big, black "dream warrior," one of the survivors, in A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 3, and is also starring in the new sequel to be released in August. "Tom [DeWier] and I made a pact way back when we were both security guards at Universal Studios," said Sagoes, who can be seen weekly on TV's WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW. "We vowed to appear in each other's first project. So, here I am. The main difference between this and a feature like A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 3, besides the money, is the time involved. It's a 10 day shooting schedule as opposed to six weeks, but technically there is no difference. And, everybody's a lot friendlier here."

Special effects makeup artist Judy Yonemoto has her hands full on DEATH BY DIALOGUE. Besides the undead biker, dubbed "Mad Max," played by Mark Ginther, who spent an hour chained to Bruce Willis in the "Cool Hand Dave" episode of MOONLIGHTING, there's a decapitation, an exploding head and leg, fire stunts, an elaborate melting man, and lots more. Yonemoto has been responsible for the blood and gore effects on most City Lights films, and was assisted

by Frank Romero.

The film also features a human-size gargoyle built by Damon Charles, president of the Institute of Studio Makeup. Made of upholstery sponge and latex, the prop was tied with tape to highlight muscles, and covered with rubber cement paint. Cream of chicken soup and fake blood were pumped through tubes to pour out of the gargoyle's nose and mouth as it comes to life.

For the film's most elaborate stunt DeWier called in Dave Gladstone's Raiders of the Lost Art, responsible for set designs on David Lee Roth's videos and for the revolving room in Lionel Ritchie's "Dancing on the Ceiling" video. Said DeWier, describing the effect, "There's a young couple

making love in a hay loft. Suddenly the walls start breathing and oozing blood! Blue smoke comes up and suddenly... vroom! She flies straight back through the wall, about 23 feet in the air."

Jude Gerrard of the improv group Generic Comedy Troupe plays the hapless young stud whose girlfriend is sucked into space. Later, Gerrard's head explodes. "Yes, I have lost my head over this movie," he quipped. □

It takes more than a pick-axe to the stomach to stop the machete-wielding undead biker played by Mark Ginther.



# MORTUARY ACADEMY

Paul Bartel's comedy about necrophilia, for all those fans of *POLICE ACADEMY*.

By Bob Strauss

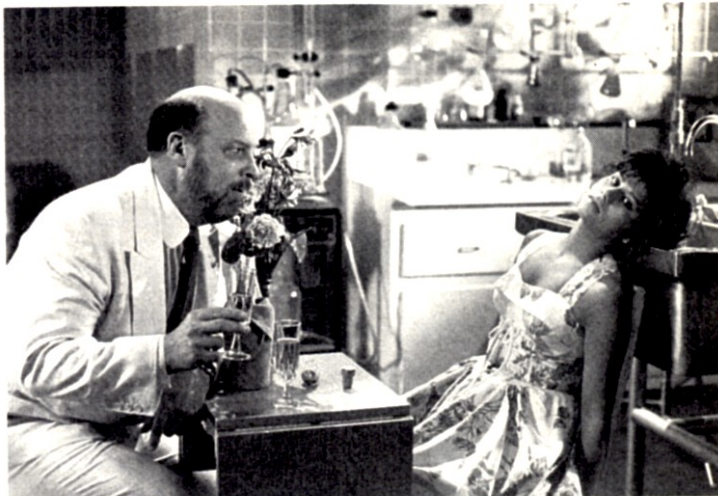
A typical day on the campus of *MORTUARY ACADEMY* involves future funeral directors who are supposed to study the tricks of the trade, spending most of their time tricking one another. The film—a black comedy that features a weirdo dream cast as its faculty and student, ahem, body—opened regionally early this year, and is the first release from newly organized Landmark Films Productions. Paul (EATING RAOUL)

from the *EATING RAOUL* crowd.

"The key word here is taste," Schroeder continued. "Now, try to do necrophilia and reanimated corpses tastefully. I'm not really sure how to, but we try to play it on people's faces and in the lighting and so forth. Instead of actually hitting the audience over the head with it, we hovered around it. It's very funny. When you do that, you keep an uncomfortable situation tongue-in-cheek."

As the Academy's Dean Truscott, Bartel finds relief from at-work pressures and a hostile takeover attempt with the remains of a nubile cheerleader who choked to death on a piece of popcorn. "The challenge of this part is to make this guy sympathetic to the audience," Bartel explained with strained seriousness. "The key to doing that is to make them understand that, although objectively he is attracted to corpses, subjectively, they present him with the challenge of overcoming their indifference. He hears their voices, and he's very discreet. It takes a long time before he consents—and always at their demand—to go all the way with them. *Never* on the first date, and hardly ever on the second.

"I want to see if I can make it touching and funny, without it being in bad taste," Bartel continued. "There's no objective way of doing it. It's all instinctive. You just have to go with your gut feeling and try to seduce the audience



Academy dean Paul Bartel on a date with dead cheerleader Cheryl Starbuck.

with personality and kindness. In some ways, he's a very nice guy. This is just one of many delicate balances in the film."

Cheryl Starbuck plays the inanimate object of Bartel's ardor. Schroeder met stunt stand-in Starbuck when he was assistant directing *SHY PEOPLE* in Louisiana. The young, aspiring actress was thrilled to be cast for such a pivotal part in a Hollywood movie. Thrilled, that is, until she got to the location. "I spend the whole movie being dragged around by Paul Bartel," she laughed. "It's difficult being still for so long, having to hold your breath and stop your eyes from fluttering. There are a number of long monologue scenes, where the camera stays on both of us for three or four minutes. I got dizzy a few times from holding my breath too long."

Besides not breathing, another thing Starbuck had to prevent herself from doing was laughing out

loud. "The way Paul [Bartel] delivered his lines during our lovemaking scene was so funny, I had to pinch my leg so hard to keep from laughing that I gave myself a big bruise."

As with most aspects of *MORTUARY ACADEMY*, Starbuck's performance was the result of intensive technical research. "I play it limp," she explained. "We found out that a couple of days after rigor mortis, you soften up and get flexible. They always call it 'a stiff,' but I learned otherwise."

Starbuck tells herself that her grueling *MORTUARY ACADEMY* role is a good career move. "Hopefully, I'll get an agent out of this," she good-naturedly speculated. "Someone'll see me and say, 'Who's that girl? Let's use her.' I think I'm very lucky. But I hope I don't get typecast as The Dead Girl. Maybe I'll graduate to zombie roles. At least then, I can move around on my own." □



Schroeder

and outrageous personal choices. Michael Schroeder, a longtime Hollywood producer (*ONE DARK NIGHT*), production manager and assistant director (for, among others, Bartel), makes his feature directing debut.

"Paul agreed to appear in the film if they allowed me to direct it," Schroeder revealed. "When I came on board, I began rewriting the script at length. The first draft was a bit distasteful, I thought, a little offensive. I wanted to make it more of a crossover film teens and kids would enjoy and get away

## BOXOFFICE SURVEY: GENRE 1ST QUARTER PLUMMETS AFTER 3-YEAR GAIN

An analysis of the 50 Top Grossing Films, as reported weekly by *Variety*, reveals that in the first 13 weeks of 1988, revenue from horror, fantasy, and science fiction films fell a whopping 127% over last year, while film grosses in general rose 7.9%.

In the first quarter the genre accounted for just slightly more than one tenth (11.1%) of all film revenue generated at the boxoffice. This brings the healthy first quarter patterns established over the past three years to a dramatic halt. Hardest hit by the revenue deficit was fantasy,

which fell 340%; while science fiction suffered to the tune of 119%. Horror revenue was least affected by this drop, aided in part by the strong performance of Wes Craven's *THE SERPENT AND THE RAINBOW*.

Of the 139 titles that comprised the weekly listings, 30 or 21.6% were genre titles. There were 9 science fiction films (6 last year), accounting for 6.5% of the total and 2% of receipts; 11 fantasy films (12 last year), 7.9% of the total and 2.8% of receipts; and 10 horror films (14 last year), 7.2% of the total and 6.3% of receipts.

Top-grossing genre films in the *Variety* totals are listed at right (through 4/27). For purposes of breakdown by genre, titles are indicated as horror (h), fantasy (f), and science fiction (sf), followed by the number of weeks each title made it into the Top 50 listings since January. The totals do not include boxoffice figures from previous years for reissues or films (•) first released in 1987. The dollar amounts listed represent only a small, scientific sample of a film's total earnings (about one fourth of a film's domestic gross). □

### TOP GENRE FILMS OF '88

BEETLEJUICE (f, 4)	\$10,851,684
THE SERPENT AND THE RAINBOW (h, 8)	\$ 6,060,821
• FATAL ATTRACTION (h, 16)	\$ 4,899,977
THE SEVENTH SIGN (h, 4)	\$ 4,190,407
• BATTERIES NOT INCLUDED (f, 8)	\$ 3,617,112
• THE FOX AND THE HOUND (f, 5)	\$ 3,578,802
VICE VERSA (f, 5)	\$ 3,508,941
RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD 2 (h, 6)	\$ 2,990,634
BAD DREAMS (h, 3)	\$ 2,746,351
THE MILAGRO BEANFIELD WAR (h, 6)	\$ 1,929,136
• CINDERELLA (f, 6)	\$ 868,756
• THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE (sf, 11)	\$ 705,100
18 AGAIN (f, 2)	\$ 534,048
PRISON (h, 3)	\$ 520,000
THE UNHOLY (h, 1)	\$ 514,888

# OUTER HEAT

**SF as political allegory aims high, but strays into ALIEN territory.**

*By Patrick Hobby*

What would Los Angeles be like if three hundred thousand illegal aliens—no, not from south of the border, from outer space—happened to land in the Mojave Desert when their rocket transport malfunctions? That's the multi-million dollar question 20th Century-Fox and Gale Anne Hurd are hoping you'll be lined up to see answered when **OUTER HEAT** hits theatres August 5.



Co-producer Gale Anne Hurd.

According to the screenplay by TWILIGHT ZONE story editor Rockne S. O'Bannon, some of these alien "newcomers" become police detectives, like Francisco, played by Mandy Patinkin, who scored as Spanish swordsman Inigo Montoya in **THE PRINCESS BRIDE**. O'Bannon's story revolves around Francisco's relationship with his human partner, Sykes, played by James Caan, who is determined to solve the murder of his former partner. In the process of investigating the case, the partners must put aside their racial prejudice and mutual distrust as they uncover something far more evil and dangerous, something having to do with a successful "newcomer" entrepreneur with sinister motives, William Harcourt, played by Terence Stamp.

O'Bannon's *film noir* science fiction thriller underwent a rather complex birth cycle before finally reaching the screen. O'Bannon had originally proposed the idea to producer Richard Kobritz (**SALEM'S LOT**), during the hiatus of **THE TWILIGHT ZONE**. Kobritz urged O'Bannon to write the script, then took it to Gale Anne Hurd's Pacific Western Productions. O'Bannon's script has reportedly been rewritten by Hurd's production partner/husband, James Cameron. O'Bannon said he wouldn't comment about the production without the okay of 20th Century-Fox. Repeated requests to Fox publicist Eddie Egan for an O'Bannon interview

went unaided.

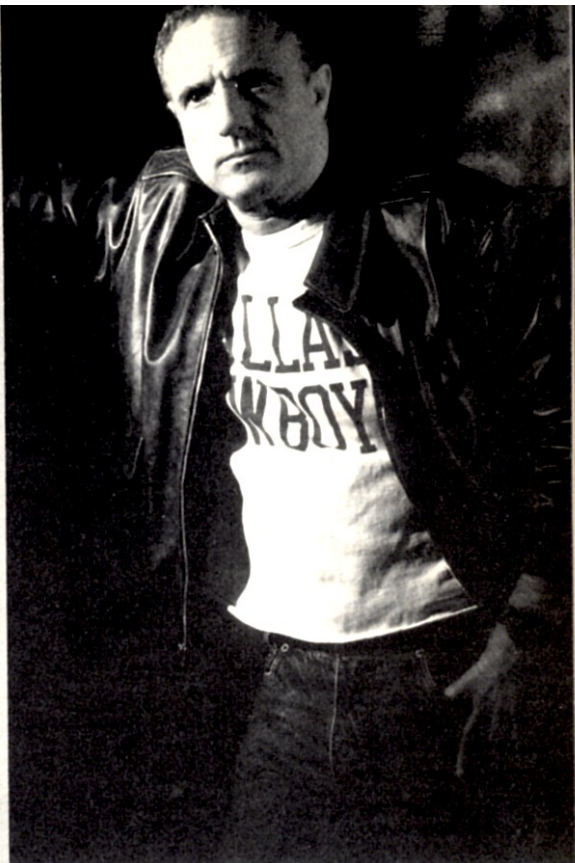
O'Bannon's original script posited the aliens' arrival in a malfunctioning, fully-automated slave ship. The aliens, a genetically engineered humanoid race, bred for hard labor in almost any environment, are found in suspended animation. Once revived, with no grasp of the technology that carried them, their history unknown, they become candidates for a green card. Producer Hurd described the aliens for the

*L.A. Times* as "not exactly like us, but close enough to be of the same species."

O'Bannon's script reads like 48 HOURS, a science fiction take on the "buddy picture" formula. Larger and more muscular, O'Bannon gives the aliens several quirks to differentiate them from humans. They get drunk on sour milk and eat furry strips of raw meat, sold as a fast food at McDonald's. Certain rock music acts on their system like an aphrodisiac, and simple sea water eats through their bodies like acid.

Helming the film is British director Graham Baker, whose feature credits include **THE OMEN** sequel **THE FINAL CONFLICT** and **IMPULSE**. Baker has produced, written and directed numerous commercials in London, including recent spots for Isuzu's "Liar," the look of which confirmed Hurd and Kobritz's belief that he was the right man for their project.

Principal photography began October 12, 1987 in Los Angeles. The film's director of photography is Adam Greenberg, a veteran of over eighty films, including **NEAR DARK** and Hurd and Cameron's **THE TERMINATOR**. Like the latter, most of **OUTER HEAT**'s exteriors take place at night on actual Los Angeles streets, which often necessitated their closing for extended periods. At one point, thanks to location manager Cass Martin and the cooperation of local government officials, the company received permission to close several blocks of busy West-



James Caan plays a cop with a non-human partner in near-future L.A., when Earth's population has taken in a wave of immigrant aliens from another planet.

ern Boulevard, which doubled as the "newcomer" barrio, Slagtown. Other exteriors included Nicholas Canyon Beach and an L.A. landmark, the original Tommy's Burgers on Beverly at Rampart.

Ultimately, Caan and Patinkin end up investigating more than a murder when Stamp turns out to be an alien master criminal running drugs to the newcomers. Hurd played up the film's more serious themes—racial prejudice, politics, drugs—when she talked to the *L.A. Times*. "It's really very allegoric," she said. Unfortunately, however, O'Bannon's script casts off the mantle of political allegory at the end and veers straight into ALIEN territory.

Cornered by the police at the climax, Stamp dies in a hail of bullets after ingesting massive quantities of the alien narcotic only to transform into a monstrous warrior alien—a drug-induced mutation used by the extraterrestrial master race to fight their wars. After wreaking havoc a la **THE HIDDEN**, the monster seeks refuge in the sewers of L.A., tracked by Caan and Patinkin in claustrophobic action that reads like it was transferred directly from the *Nostromo*. The unlikely climax of O'Bannon's script has Caan and the monster duke it out while hanging from the rung of a flying helicopter, heading toward the Pacific to dunk it in the ocean's acid waters.

Zoltan Elek, who won an Oscar for **MASK**, supervised Stamp's transformation makeup, working with a team at the Stan Winston Studio, the company that supplied the makeup effects for **THE TERMINATOR** and **ALIENS**. □

# TROMA'S WAR

**Welcome to the world of Troma and its loony, off-the wall approach to movie exploitation.**

*By Dan Persons*

A psychotic used-car salesman. A machine-gun-toting grandma. Siamese twins joined at the head. Roving squadrons of diseased sex-fiends. If it's not the front page of the *National Enquirer*, then it must be WAR, the latest product from the most outrageous film-factory east of the Rockies: Troma, Inc.

In these bottom-line days in the film industry, to come across a producer with any greater ambition than to turn a tidy profit is a rare event. But to hear him tell it, Troma president/producer/sometime director Lloyd Kaufman has loftier goals for his product:

"We believe that Troma is creating peace through celluloid," said Kaufman, as he sat behind his profoundly littered desk, a mangled dessicated corpse from the recently completed WAR propped up in the corner behind him. "No country that has ever bought a Troma movie has gone to war. Iraq refused to buy Troma movies—they had war. Iran refused to buy Troma movies—they had war. Russia... Instead of buying a Troma movie, they went into Afghanistan—look what happened. Whereas France, Germany, England, Japan, they have been war-free since they started buying Troma movies."

"The one year that the U. K. did not buy a Troma movie," added vice-president/producer/director/office mate Michael Herz, "what happened? Falklands."

Kaufman nodded in agreement. "People ask us 'Do you think Troma will ever get Oscars?' Perhaps. But I think what will be our day of glory will be the Nobel Peace Prize. I don't think that you'll hear of any other film company even suggesting that it deserves a Nobel Peace Prize."

Welcome to the world of Troma, Inc.,



The Troma Team: president Lloyd Kaufman (right) and VP Michael Herz.

a company where it seems that the corporate symbol should be a tongue firmly planted in cheek. What other film studio would take out an ad in *Variety* urging members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to nominate SURF NAZIS MUST DIE for Best Picture, Best Actress, and Best Director? What corporation can boast a president who appears on nationwide television, hoisting wedges of cold pizza to visually represent "Troma's piece of the marketing pie"? What other company wins friends and influences people by plying them with tiny bottles of Aroma du Troma perfume ("It's the smell of \$\$\$")? Which producer attends film conventions with cratesfuls of *The Troma Times*—newsletter-style publicity fliers that mix ultra-hyperbolic pitches for their latest films (every title seems to be "action-packed," "spectacular," and "a classic") with articles promising that a trip to the Troma suite will net a visitor "chairs, clean salespersons"?

Troma's WAR, a \$2 million production, which the company plans to debut at this year's Cannes Film Festival, tells

the story of a group of tourists who, having crash-landed on the fictional Caribbean island of Providencia, find themselves the only defense against a right-wing conspiracy to infiltrate and invade America. Directed and produced by Herz, the film is, according to fellow co-producer and co-director Kaufman, "a very, very important picture. There's never been anything, in terms of our body of work, that we felt so strongly about. It's a mature, major work."

While the term "mature" may be open to question—not many mature films feature female guerrillas sporting uniforms that could baffle the Army Corps of Engineers—there is no doubt that, for

Troma, this is a big production. With its budget clocking in at about half a million more than the company's previous prestige offering—THE TOXIC AVENGER—the eight-week shoot utilized three film units and ranged across the state of New York in its quest for locations that would bring Mitchell Dana's script (with added material by Eric Hatler, Tom Martinek, and Lloyd Kaufman) to life. Most of the production was based in the Bear Mountains, while additional footage was shot in such exotic locales as the piers of Brooklyn, and the beaches of Caumsett State Park on Long Island. George T. Norris (JOE) was brought in to supervise editing, which took place at the company's in-house facilities. Troma hoped to find theatres to open the film in May.

Despite the relatively sumptuous production values, Kaufman (who will take directing credit under his pseudonym Samuel Weil) assured fans that WAR will follow the same traditions established by such previous Troma hits as CLASS OF NUKE 'EM HIGH and SURF NAZIS MUST DIE: "With



Burt Wright and Michael Cleary, the siamese twins of Troma's CLUB WAR part company, in makeup designed by William Jennings.

TOXIC AVENGER, we were one of the first to use gore effects in a comedy. Now, all the techniques that we've used in the horror genre are being applied to the war genre, to the battle scenes. We've taken the war movie and we've Tromaized it, with heavy doses of comedy, crazy special effects, and unbelievable situations."

In fact, the Troma tendency to apply irreverent humor to the most dire of subjects may have landed WAR in hot water even before it went in front of the cameras. Several months ago, word began spreading that a major plot point of the film would be the presence of an "AIDS Brigade"—a group of commandos who would infiltrate and spread the deadly disease amongst unsuspecting men and women. While the news of this prompted protests from several gay groups, Kaufman held that such objections were unwarranted: "It's very superficial, it's a very small element. It's there, part of how they're going to infiltrate, how they're going to cause chaos in the United States and then swoop in and take over. But they have different ways of infiltrating: they're going to dump money in, they're going to come bomb, they're going to invade, they're going to do everything possible. Some of the newspapers focussed on this one little element. But it's a minor thing."

Other irreverent Troma plot elements include a blind girl (Lisa Patruno) who holds the enemy at bay with sniper

**“What other film studio would take out an ad in Variety urging Academy members to nominate SURF NAZIS MUST DIE for the Oscar for Best Picture?”**

attacks from the roof of a building, and the psychotic "Nam vet" salesman (Mike Ryder) who strings up garlands of ears liberated from dead—and sometimes not-so-dead—soldiers. If that isn't enough to set WAR apart from films like THE SANDS OF IWO JIMA, then the sight of those Siamese twins (simultaneously garbed in a soldier's uniform and a three-piece suit—all the better to clarify their roles as representatives of the military-industrial complex), or of a terrorist commandante (Rick Collins) with the snout of a pig, should do the trick quite nicely.

Because of these characters, and the general gory nature of the film, WAR is liberally sprinkled with makeup effects. Special effects coordinator William Jennings takes credit for makeup design, with assistance coming from Pericles Lewnes (who serves triple-duty as the film's assistant director and second-unit director), and Steve Patrick. The twins may be WAR's most fascinating effect: a six-hour makeup job that physically harnessed actors Burt Wright and Michael Cleary together, their freedom coming

only after a punk-rocker (Aleida Harris) performs some in-the-field surgery on their connecting flesh with a machete.

Troma's loony, off-the-wall approach to movie exploitation was inspired by Kaufman's and Herz' shared passion for the cheapjack productions of Roger Corman and Samuel Arkoff. Noting the

growing potential presented by the conversion of old movie palaces into multiplexes, the two Yale grads resolved to build a movie company that could serve a specific need: providing exhibitors with films that fill programming gaps left after one major Hollywood production "falls out of bed," but before the next big-budget epic is due to arrive.

That they have managed to survive and show profits (the company expected to end up with a not inconsiderable \$3 million for 1987), is due not only to films that consistently end up on many critics' "Guilty Pleasures" lists, but also to a philosophy that drives everybody involved with the company to pinch pennies, then pinch them again. Thus, while letterheads proudly trumpet the existence of the Troma Building, it is not explained that the company-owned building is actually a four-story walkup in the heart of New York's less-than-elite Hell's Kitchen. Never do a Troma production's credits make clear that crew members and stars may have only yesterday been stuffing envelopes or answer-

continued on page 58

# CHILD'S PLAY

By Steven  
Jongeward

Young Andy just got the latest, every-kid's-gotta-have-one toy—a "Good Guy" doll. Andy's new pal is never far from his side and is so utterly life-like, it's frightening, and ultimately, very deadly. That's the premise of director Tom Holland's new film *CHILDSPLAY*, a "psychological thriller-with-a-twist," according to Holland, the screenwriter who made his stylish directing debut on 1985's *FRIGHT NIGHT*. The film marks a return for Holland to territory that is, as he put it, "more akin to *FRIGHT NIGHT* than anything else." In a somewhat ironic turn of events, MGM/UA plans to release the film at the end of July, head-to-head with New Century/Vista's release of *FRIGHT NIGHT II* on August 5th, which Holland had once been slated to direct.

According to Holland, the original story elements of *CHILDSPLAY* came from a script by Don Mancini, and is not to be confused with the 1972 film of the same name (3:1:31), a satanic parable directed by Sidney Lumet, starring James Mason and Robert Preston. Holland said he took the basic situations from Mancini's script and created his own original screenplay. Those basic elements told the story of a mother giving her son a doll, which the boy soon discovers is alive. Holland is furious about a ruling from the Writer's Guild that gives Mancini co-credit for Holland's script. "This is an original screenplay, even if the credits say it isn't," said Holland. "I'm

**A new horror/fantasy from  
writer/director Tom Holland,  
creator of *FRIGHT NIGHT*.**



Director Tom Holland waits pensively while an effects puppet of Chucky is readied for filming.

going to have to share a screenplay credit because of the Writer's Guild. They're so prejudiced against writer-directors." The horror classic *DEAD OF NIGHT* (1945), *MAGIC*, Stuart Gordon's *DOLLS*, and a few episodes of *THE TWILIGHT ZONE* have all dipped into the territory Holland is now repaving. Holland described his story as psychological-suspense for the first 60-65 pages of the script, the first half of the film. Young Andy is swept up in several murders, and eventually committed for close psychological observation. While undergoing the scrutiny of doctors, more kill-

ings occur and Andy is vindicated. With his mother's help, Andy sets out to find and stop... "Chucky!" Producing *CHILDSPLAY* for United Artists is David Kirschner, who entered the arena of filmmaking through the sale of his "Rose Petal Place" characters to Hallmark for merchandising and a series of television specials. As a writer and illustrator of children's stories, toys and children are two areas Kirschner is well-versed in. More recently Kirschner teamed with Steven Spielberg on *AN AMERICAN TAIL*, creating the characters, story, and serving as co-execu-

tive producer. Kirschner bought the rights to Mancini's original script for *CHILDSPLAY*. "I've always wanted to do a story about dolls," said Kirschner. "I was intrigued and frightened by my sisters' dolls when I was very young. The original story had elements in it that I loved."

*CHILDSPLAY* stars newcomer Alex Vincent as six year-old Andy, who discovers that "Chucky," his "best pal," can do a lot more than talk and roll his eyes. Teaming again with Holland is *FRIGHT NIGHT* star Chris Sarandon, this time as a Chicago detective. Catherine Hicks of *STAR TREK IV* plays Andy's mother, and Brad Dourif (*ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST*, *DUNE*) is a psychotic whose evil mind is a springboard for the film's action.

Kevin Yagher designed and built "Chucky" in at least 20 different effects incarnations. According to Yagher, the core of the doll army enlisted for service throughout filming included stunt dolls, rod puppet dolls, servo-motor driven dolls, cable-operated dolls, and a few ordinary non-effects-equipped dolls, called affectionately, "rag dolls." Aside from the mechanical puppet action in the film, Holland also planned to utilize forced perspective, matte, process, and blue screen shots to enhance his story.

The amount of puppet work in *CHILDSPLAY* is extensive. Puppeteers underneath the sets performed with the live actors above, referring to the action seen on a video tap off the Panavision camera, fed to monitors. "I'm using several





Chucky and midget Ed Gail, who plays the doll in scenes shot on a special oversized set built at Laird Studios.

warm and a bit noisy, because of the servos." The motors articulated eye, eyebrow and cheek movements.

Besides being completely satisfied with the effects side of the production, Holland felt he truly chose a wonderful cast. "The only one we're missing on this one is Roddy [McDowall]," he said, referring to the star of *FRIGHT NIGHT* and its sequel. Working with young Alex Vincent, for Holland, was a very rewarding experience. "We shot a scene in a mental institution where I brought Alex to tears, and ever since then he's been making leaps and bounds," said Holland. "He's going to give Roddy McDowall a run for his money in *HOW GREEN WAS MY VALLEY!*" □

Above: Andy (Alex Vincent) plays with his new best friend, a "Good Guys" doll that he dubs Chucky. Right: To make the doll come alive, effects expert Kevin Yagher built the doll as an animatronic puppet, shown here with four of its eight puppeteers.

types of puppets," explained Holland. "In addition to a close-up puppet, which really works wonderfully, we have a walking puppet with a ten-foot boom that attaches itself behind the puppet. There is a full-rig puppet, a standing puppet—which is attached via drilled holes in the floor. All the sets have been built four feet off the ground, so that the puppeteers can get underneath."

One of several techniques used to bring "Chucky" to life

in *CHILDSPLAY* was the use of a large set constructed one-third over scale at Laird Studios in Culver City. "We spent over \$100,000 to build the original set," said Holland. "Don't ask me how much we spent to duplicate it one-third larger—the whole damn set!" For these scenes Yagher built a mechanical head, worn by midget actor Ed Gail (the "little person" inside *HOWARD THE DUCK*). "This head is very much like the 'Howard' head," said Gail. "It's



**Angus Scrimm as the Tall Man in PHANTASM II, to be released August 19. Scrimm is standing between the twin actuating poles of the "space gate," the dimensional warping device he uses to transport the bodies of Earthlings back to his home planet.**



# PHANTASM II

## Director Don Coscarelli brings back Tall Man Angus Scrimm in a sequel to his 1979 horror hit.

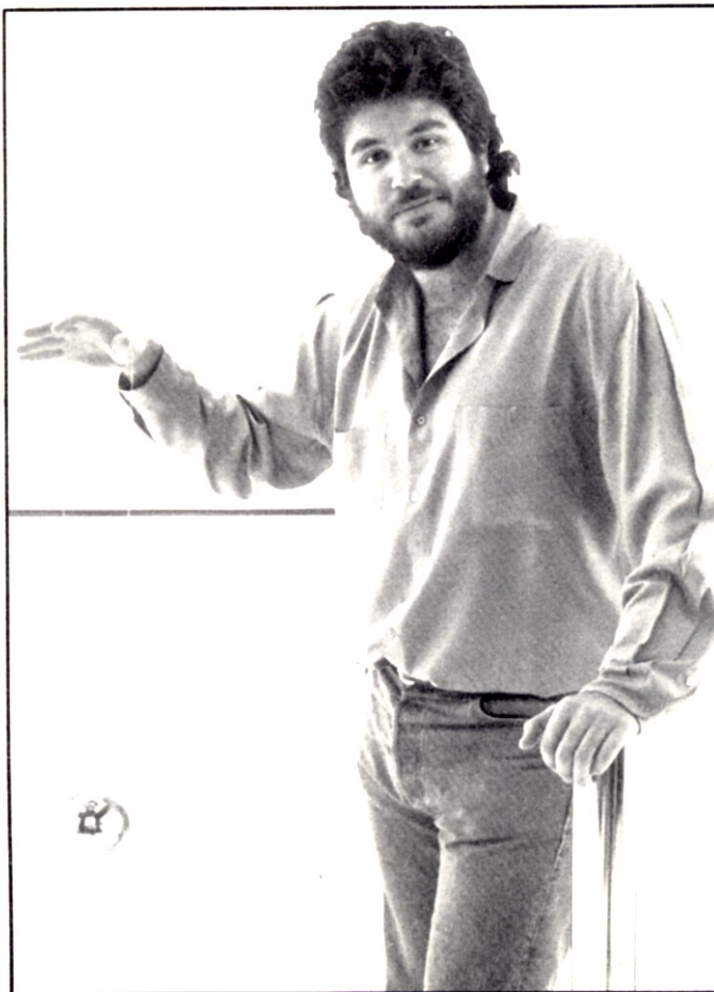
By Eric Gilmartin  
& Robert Salzer

Don Coscarelli is back as the writer and director of PHANTASM II, the sequel to his 1979 surprise boxoffice hit (see page 29). The film was shot independently earlier this year in an innocuous-looking warehouse in Chatsworth, in the San Fernando Valley in southern California. Universal picked up the film for release, and has scheduled an August 19 opening nationwide.

Though the site of the location shooting was hot and Indian-summery outside, the warehouse sets proved to be a spooky beehive of simulated evil-doing on the inside. An intense feeling of *deja vu* is experienced during a walk-through of all the interior sets. Those familiar chills run up and down your spine at the very sight of the crematorium of Morningside Mortuary; the gleaming white "space gate" portal with its tuning-fork actuating poles; those eerie black cannisters containing dwarf slave laborers created from the undead corpses of recently deceased Earthlings; and especially that nightmarish ebony Cadillac hearse, personal workhorse of the horrible Tall Man. Everything you loved to hate in the original PHANTASM is back... whether you like it or not, boy!!

Besides Coscarelli, actor Angus Scrimm is back to recreate his role as the hulking, seemingly indestructible Tall Man. Scrimm said he and Cos-

**“Working long hours, one of the carpenters was dubbed ‘Vampire’ when found emerging one morning from a good night’s sleep inside one of the set’s glass coffins.”**

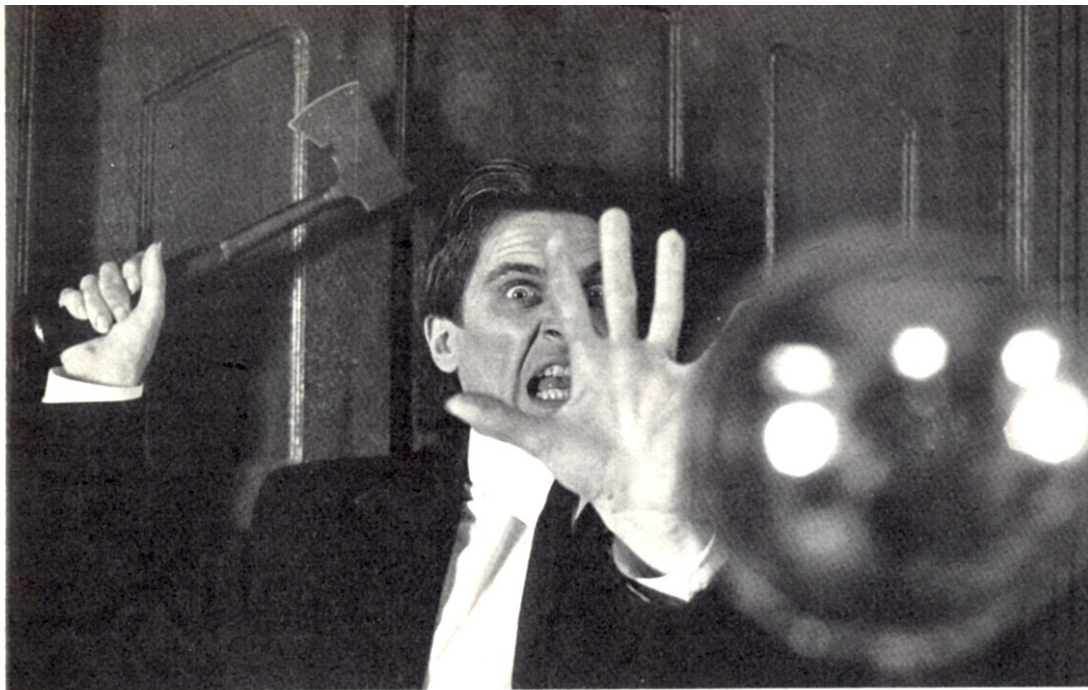


Director Don Coscarelli, the creator of PHANTASM, toys with one of the Tall Man's lethal silver spheres on the "space gate" set of PHANTASM II, a Universal release.

carelli had discussed the idea of doing another PHANTASM for several years. "I was delighted to have this opportunity to bring the Tall Man fully back to life again," said Scrimm. "He had always seemed like an old friend of mine. He had always stayed with me." Coscarelli said that he has always viewed the tale of the Tall Man as a trilogy.

During filming Coscarelli is offered a steady stream of suggestions from actress Paula Irvine, who plays Liz. The character is no visual adornment in this film, no easy victim for the evil Tall Man and his mindless minions; she becomes a full-fledged equal partner to the male heroes of the story, Mike (James Le Gros) and Reggie (Reggie Bannister). Accordingly she is knocked around, assaulted and generally harassed by just about every evil creature in the script. One crew member calls her "a blond, teenaged Ripley," alluding to Sigourney Weaver's robustly heroic character in ALIENS. It's a good analogy: at one point, Liz is grabbed by the Tall Man and one-handedly thrown clear across a room. (The effect is achieved by means of a crane and harness system, the type which was used to help Christopher Reeve fly in the SUPERMAN films, and John Lithgow to spacewalk in 2010.)

Clearly, PHANTASM II is planning to exceed the level of sheer physical excitement of the original. Genuine working air-mixture flamethrowers, capable of firing huge tongues



Mark Anthony Majors tries to defend himself from one of the Tall Man's whizzing silver spheres in PHANTASM II.

of fire over 20 feet through the air (designed to appear "home-built, in a guy's own garage") can be seen in the mechanical effects room. An intriguing double-shotgun weapon has been created by bevelling all four barrels into a tapered point, and then creating a *single* trigger and gun butt. The silver spheres, at one point, literally *blast* their way through several locked doors; the explosions are rigged to be detonated *ahead* of the monstrous death-dealing orbs as they approach. A "ramrod" is also mentioned, which blows its way through *three* doors. A car

is flipped over onto its back and literally blown to Hell, along with some undoubtedly hellish riders.

The film's single greatest "mechanical effect," occurs when an entire house is actually incinerated—even though the thunderous explosion fails to coax even the slightest facial reaction from the glowering Tall Man (one of PHANTASM II's blackest comic moments). Seven cameras were used to record this "once in a lifetime" shot, and a real house which had been scheduled for demolition—to make way for a new freeway overpass—was "torched." And where did the film's pyrotechnician learn his trade? The perfect place: Special Forces Demolition Team, Viet Nam, 1966. From a horrific war to a war of horror in 22 short years.

Far more intriguing than mere explosions and pyrotechnics, however, are the whizzing silver spheres, the preferred weapon of the Tall Man, and one of the most ingenious conceits of the original film. The mechanical effects supervisor reports that no less than 50 of the little devils are being employed for their many appearances in PHANTASM II. The spheres are injected into the story by a combination of hanging wires and matte shots—and, the mechanical effects supervisor adds, only half jokingly, "Sometimes we just *throw* them at the

actors!"

The film's visual effects wouldn't be complete, however, without that staple of the horror-film genre: makeup. Mark Shostrom, who does the latex magic on PHANTASM II, is fast becoming one of the leaders in the field, having worked on NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 2 & 3, FROM BEYOND, and EVIL DEAD 2. Sam Raimi, the director of EVIL DEAD 2, a close personal friend of Coscarelli's, recommended Shostrom for the task of re-creating the alien dwarf minions and their sinister leader, the Tall Man, various spectral manifestations, and graphic wounds.

Shostrom displayed a mechanical mock-up of the Tall Man's head, showing his face contorted by a grimace of agony, a gaping bullet hole

over the left eye. This is an early stage of what Shostrom describes as the "six-hour makeup session" to come with actor Scrimm. When Mike delivers a "fatal" wound to his evil adversary with the double-shotgun weapon, he watches in dismay as the Tall Man begins to undergo a transformation.

Shostrom compared Coscarelli's directing style to that of Raimi's. "Raimi was very specific, but he also gave me a lot of freedom, to do what I wanted. Coscarelli is a little bit more vague, in describing what he wants, but he knows it when he sees it, so it's a process of showing him things that he can build upon."

One element of the new film which is sure to draw attention—and possibly controversy—is the abundance of Catholic imagery. Crucifixes are seen everywhere (including one, sheathed in the darkness of an unlit hallway, which is caked in stage blood), and a major character, Father Meyers (Kenneth Tigar), receives some very unholy visitations at his church. As Coscarelli methodically shoots a spectral appearance outside the church, a crew member wearing a makeup appliance to "age" his hand, as well as a slip-on black sleeve, opens and shuts a peephole to reveal the ghoulish face beyond. Coscarelli, watching the filming on the video monitor, has to do 13 takes before he's satisfied. No hack directing here. (Incidentally, to facilitate the conversion of PHANTASM II from theatre to television aspect ratios, Coscarelli's

One of the dwarf slaves of the Tall Man in PHANTASM 2, to be released July 8, makeup designed by Mark Shostrom.



Priest Kenneth Tigar cowers before the Tall Man on the Morningside Mortuary set.



# PHANTASM

## THE ORIGINAL NIGHTMARE

*A forerunner of A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET, Coscarelli's imaginative horror was a sleeper hit for Avco-Embassy.*

By Eric Gilmartin

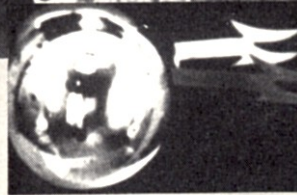
"Doing PHANTASM was a real kick for me," said its writer/director Don Coscarelli. "Fantasy, horror and science fiction were the staples when I was growing up." A Southern California resident since childhood (he was born in North Africa, interestingly enough), Coscarelli seemed fated to enter professional filmmaking from an extremely young age—though his first ventures into directing were of a more conventional nature.

Coscarelli was only 17 when he conceived and scripted his directorial debut, JIM, THE WORLD'S GREATEST, an emotional study of an alcoholic, cuckolded father who unwittingly torments his two teenaged sons. Coscarelli made the film with his then roommate at UCLA, Paul Pepperman, who acted as co-producer. Coscarelli's father, D. A. Coscarelli, gave his son the \$100,000 needed to make the picture. Universal wrote Coscarelli senior a check for twice that amount, upon seeing the completed film. Featuring a youthful Gregory Harrison (TV's LOGAN'S RUN, TRAPPER JOHN, M.D.) and Robbie Wolcott as the two sons, and future Tall Man Angus Scrimm as the anguished wretch of a father, the film died at the box office in a limited release. Also in the cast was Reggie Bannister, star of PHANTASM & PHANTASM II, then a Vietnam veteran turned musician/actor, who was spotted by Coscarelli when he appeared in a play at Long Beach City College.

Coscarelli and Pepperman went on to make a lighter film, KENNY AND CO., which featured PHANTASM actor Michael Baldwin and Bannister; it did very little business domestically, but it went on to become a hit in Japan under the revised title BOYS, BOYS. By that time, however, Coscarelli's thoughts



Mortuary handyman Ken Jones runs into one of the silver spheres (inset). PHANTASM foreshadowed A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET in its use of imaginative ideas to sell outrageously bloody special effects.



had already turned away from naturalistic cinema towards a darker world, one which would tap the collective subconscious and beam our most primitive fears and fantasies onto the big screen.

Interestingly enough, future Tall Man Scrimm triggered part of the thought process which led to the creation of PHANTASM: Said Scrimm, "I had been clowning around one day with a young boy, who was a very bright and appealing youngster, doing ferocious faces to make him giggle and squeal. Don [Coscarelli] saw me doing this, and he thought I might be good as some sort of supernatural villain. So he went off without a word to me and he came up with this script, with which I was absolutely delighted, because as a child I had just shivered, and been absolutely thrilled, by the pictures of Karloff and Lugosi."

To "come up with the script,"

more successful A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET (1984).

PHANTASM's audacious blood-and-gore scene (see photos above) nearly cost it an X-rating. Not impressed by the scene's grisly humor, the motion picture ratings board voted 6-0 to give the film an X, the commercial kiss of death. On appeal, the film was awarded an R. "We tried to do it with less blood," Coscarelli said, "but it ended up looking too realistic and too violent. This way it's a cartoon effect."

Besides co-producing PHANTASM, Pepperman took the credit, "Special effects created by," but said recently that he had nothing to do with the film's amazing silver sphere or its bloody makeup effects. According to the credits, the sphere was built by Willard Green, with makeup handled by Shirley Mae. The sphere effects for PHANTASM II are being supervised by Steve Patino of Sho-Glass Props.

Coscarelli isolated himself in a secluded mountain cabin and wrote for two weeks. Specific images came from some real-life experiences: for instance, the "severed finger" sequence was thought up after Coscarelli drove one of his fingers through the bottom of styrofoam cup and wiggled it about. Combining traditional horror (undead, evil spirits, parapsychology) with science fiction (the "space gate" portal, slave labor on an alien planet, the infamous flying spheres) allowed Coscarelli to be more "freewheeling" and to create something greater than the sum of its parts. PHANTASM definitely stands on its own as a highly original work of cinematic horror. "Phantasm" is defined as an illusory or surreal nightmare image, crossing the border of fact and imagination, an element which, like much of the film's other plot points, is duplicated by Wes Craven's

For previews, Coscarelli took PHANTASM to Cal State Long Beach's cinema studies department, where the early response resulted in some changes being made in the film's final cut. Most notably: in a climactic scene, the two teenage heroes trick the Tall Man into running into a noose—resulting in his being hung by the neck until "dead." The usually mute Scrimm was put into a body harness and given several lines to say in this apocalyptic scene, which was shot on what Scrimm called "a terribly cold night out in the hills of Agoura." The actor related that he suffered through the shooting of this scene, only to realize during the sneak preview that it was "one crescendo in the midst of many which the film didn't need. I said to Don [Coscarelli], 'I hate to say this, but I know what you're going to tell me: the hanging scene has to go!' And Don said, 'I was wondering how I was going

continued on page 55



One of the film's blackest moments: Reggie torches the Tall Man's hideout—a real house was demolished—eliciting not the slightest reaction from his glowering adversary.

video monitor is marked off into both "video" and "film" zones.)

The spooky sets for PHANTASM II feature a crematorium, a recreated mortuary and the cobwebbed staircase inside Perigord Manor, home to the Tall Man, as well as a redesigned space-gate portal room, altered by production designer Philip Duffin to have a darker, more gothic look rather than the gleaming-white, high-tech, futuristic look of the set seen in PHANTASM. One inside joke: all of the simulated "brass name plates" on the mortuary hallway walls bear the names of actual crew members of the production! The long hours of work so took their toll on one carpenter that he emerged one morning from a good night's sleep from inside one of the glass coffins; he was thereafter nicknamed "Vampire" by the crew. Cinematically speaking, director of photography Daryn Okada is busily trying to generate chills with his high and low angles, candle-lit interior scenes, and a prowling camera that recalls both Alfred Hitchcock and Brian DePalma.

Meanwhile, in another part of the soundstage, the evil Tall Man has appeared. Wait—what's this? He's actually smiling kindly at the crew members as he makes his way into a dressing room. This soft-spoken elegant gentleman *can't* be the sinister, growling Tall Man, the nightmare of teenaged boys

everywhere. Like other horror actors—especially Boris Karloff—Angus Scrimm in person is a pussycat. Scrimm has played villainous roles in films like WITCHES' BREW, THE SEVERED ARM, SWEET KILL, and a recent horror spoof, THE LOST EMPIRE, but nothing to match his performance as the Tall Man.

Scrimm is the opposite of his snarling alter ego: courtly, dignified, and almost constantly wearing a radiant smile as he discusses PHANTASM with undisguised glee. "I think people today are more sophisticated," he declared. "They've seen so many talk shows where everybody in the [movie] business shows up, and turns out to be a fatherly

guy-next-door," at which point Scrimm smiled, taken by his own self-description. "I don't think anybody's much deceived any more."

Much of the Tall Man's evil is implicit in what he does, since his dialogue in PHANTASM II, as in the original film, is quite limited. The character's trademark growly voice is much deeper and colder than Scrimm's more mellifluous speech off-camera. "I had been practicing [the voice] since last August while driving on the freeway, using voice exercises to get it down," said Scrimm. "It has a guttural harshness to it. Part of the effectiveness, certainly is [his] silence. The fact that he rarely says anything makes it more sinister. When he does say something, it has a kind of sardonic humor, and I

wonder if that could be explored more. Certainly an actor loves dialogue."

Offscreen, Scrimm (whose real name is Lawrence Guy) treads the boards in Los Angeles theatre productions; incredibly, he remarked that he used to be too shy to try out for film acting roles. (The Tall Man... *too shy*?) He has also built a thriving alternate career as a writer, first for a magazine called *Cinema*, started in the 1960s by screenwriter James R. Silke (KING SOLOMON'S MINES, with Richard Chamberlain); and later by doing liner notes for record albums by such different artists as Frank Sinatra, Edith Piaf, and Ella Fitzgerald, as well as for many classical music artists—and even, he reports with great pride, for the first Beatles LP to be released in the United States. Funny, but "Love Me Do" doesn't sound like the Tall Man's cup of blood; one more readily pictures him doing liner notes for the Rolling Stones' "Midnight Rambler" or *Their Satanic Majesties Request* LP. Seriously, Scrimm's liner notes have earned him seven Grammy nominations, including a win for, appropriately enough, an album of original film scores. (Incidentally, Coscarelli is hoping to reteam with the original film's composer Fred Myrow on a new spooky electronic score for PHANTASM II.)

If the charming and charismatic Scrimm seems to be the

Mark Shostrom (l) and assistant Bob Kurtzman ready one of the film's nightmares.



complete opposite of his malevolent screen character, then Reggie Bannister is, if anything, even more laid-back and affable than the film's reluctant hero, who has been named after the actor who plays him. Continuing a years-old collaboration with director Coscarelli, Bannister brings a reassuring presence to the new screamfest's supernatural drama. "I'm going to play Reggie the same way I played him [in PHANTASM]," said Bannister. "Reggie gets dragged, kicking and screaming, into this great adventure, whereas he more or less stumbled onto adventure in the last film. Reggie has mellowed a bit. Maybe he's always been this way, but we just didn't get to see it very much in the first picture. You're going to see more of what makes him tick this time." Alas, Reggie *won't* be playing guitar very much in the second movie.

Bannister is sharing his dressing room, as well as his on-screen exploits, with young actor James Le Gros, who is inheriting the role of Mike, Reggie's friend and the youthful hero of PHANTASM. Le Gros admits that "it remains to be seen" whether he can make audiences forget Michael Baldwin, the intense, coiled spring of a boy who appeared in the first PHANTASM, but he adds that with so much action, suspense and outright absurdity piling onto the screen, he'll be far too busy to worry about recreating another actor's mannerisms in what, given the time difference of roughly a decade, has become essentially a differ-



One of the silver spheres at work in the sequel in a grisly shot straight out of the original PHANTASM.

ent character, a *new* Mike, an adult Mike.

Le Gros spent five months in Spain acting in (and doing his own stunts for) SOLARBABIES, and recently appeared in BATTERIES NOT INCLUDED. Despite his teen-heart-throb looks, Le Gros is a serious, even intellectual actor who lacks a lot of stereotypical Hollywood vanity. Indeed, he ravenously reads a Thomas McGuane paperback novel between takes, and admits that his tastes in literature also include such authors as John Fante and Milan Kundera, who wrote the original novel of THE UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS OF BEING.

Le Gros is getting to do his own stunts on PHANTASM II, including a nighttime scene wherein he chain-saws his way through a locked door; off-

camera, he mentions a desire to become a screenwriter and to write "something to engage serious feelings rather than get into lots of action." And what of Michael Baldwin, who originated the character ten years ago? Coscarelli reported that the young man moved to Colorado, where he lives a "quiet life." Both Coscarelli and Le Gros remarked on Baldwin's "good instincts" and "cold-blooded intensity."

Coscarelli is loathe, however, to discuss the numerous similarities between PHANTASM, released in 1979, and director West Craven's A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET, released in 1984. Both films feature a constantly crumbling division between illusion and reality; both films feature horrible, adult monsters pitted in a timeless good vs. evil struggle against lonely, introspective teens; and both films end on an uncertain note, appearing to snatch victory away from the heroes and give it to the evildoers. The fact that NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET grossed millions at the box office and spawned three sequels to date is not lost upon Coscarelli, but he refused to discuss it. "I was offered the first sequel to direct, but I refused," he said with a rueful smile.

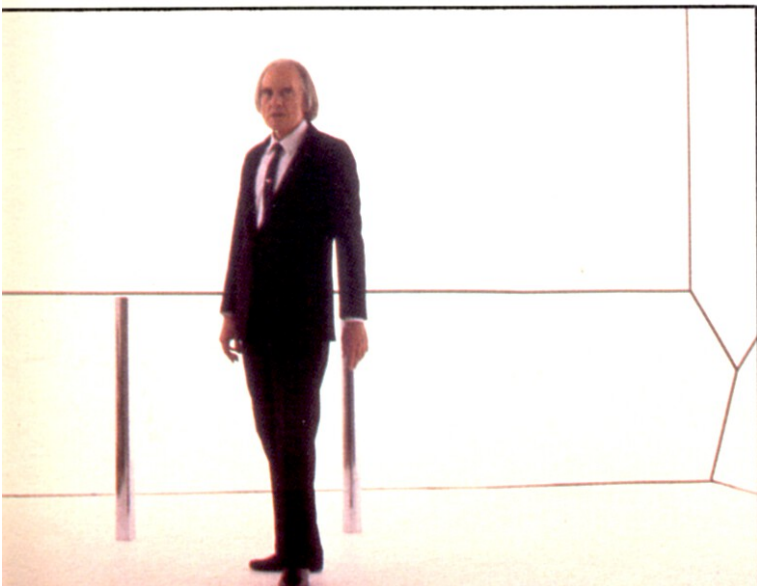
Coscarelli said he financed PHANTASM II independently from both foreign and domestic sources (the original was entirely foreign-financed).

Coscarelli is confident that PHANTASM II's performance will be strong enough to enable him to make PHANTASM III, his conclusion for the epic story of the Tall Man and the Earthlings who oppose him. Of the new film, Coscarelli said, "It's going to be more visceral, more meaty. The third picture will be much more apocalyptic in nature, and it will really get to the core of what the Tall Man is and [why he does what he does]. I'll just give you a clue: [it contains] an industrial mortuary handling 10,000 bodies a day." □

James LeGros (l) and Reggie Bannister, armed to the teeth with chainsaws, a flamethrower and a sawed-off shotgun.



Scrimm between the actuating tuning-fork poles of the futuristic "space gate" set.



# MOONTRAP

**Science fiction '50s style, with lots of production gloss, starring STAR TREK's Walter Koenig.**

*By Sue Uram*

Commercials director Robert Dyke chose an intriguing premise for MOONTRAP, his feature film directing debut, which stars STAR TREK's Walter Koenig. Filmed independently in Detroit for release later this year by the newly formed Shapiro/Glickenhau company, the film tells of mankind's encounter with the kind of extraterrestrial intelligence posited by the von Neumann machine theory. Published by mathematician John von Neumann in 1948, the theory outlined the manner in which extraterrestrials might try to locate other intelligent life in the universe. According to von Neumann, extraterrestrials could build a sophisticated probe capable of using the native materials on whatever world it landed to build a duplicate of itself to be launched to explore successive worlds. MOONTRAP tells of man's encounter with a von Neumann probe that has gone awry.

Dyke, who heads Detroit's Magic Lantern Studios, a producer of commercials and special effects, said he's always had an interest in science fiction. He teamed up two years ago with friend Tex Ragsdale, another science fiction fan and an ad exec at Detroit's Smith-Winchester Agency, to come up with the script for MOONTRAP. Dyke raised money from local businessmen to finance pre-production work, using local talent. Shapiro/Glickenhau entered the picture through the Grace and Wilde video distribution company, partially owned by Dyke's wife. Set up with a budget of \$3.6 million—Dyke said science fiction doesn't have to be expensive—two large ware-



Leigh Lombardi gets examined by a Kaaliun, a self-replicating biomechanical alien which uses human body parts to make copies of itself, inside its base on the moon.

houses were secured as a base for the production in Troy, Michigan, a Detroit suburb.

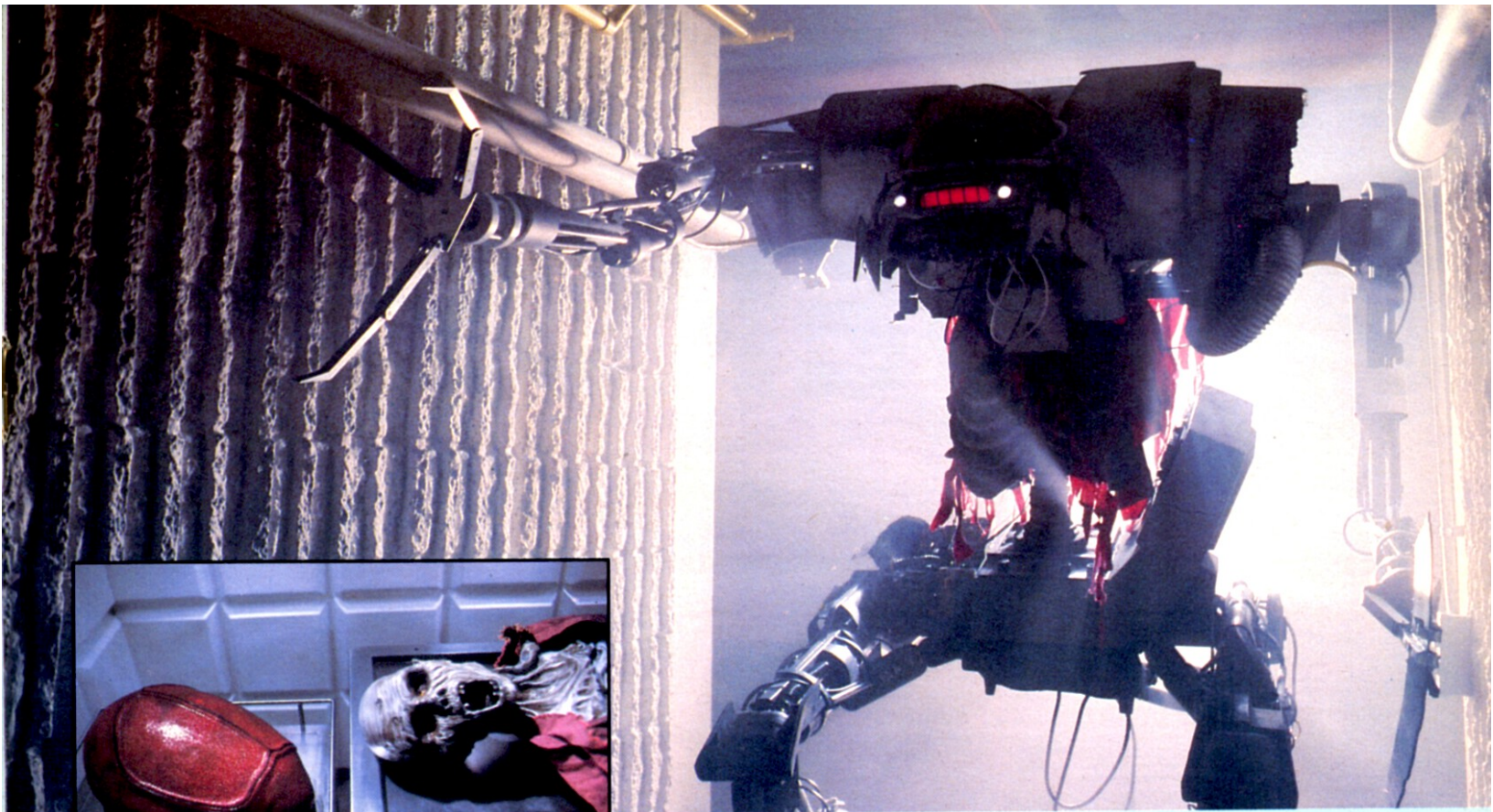
Walter Koenig stars in the film with Detroit actor/producer Bruce Campbell, who played zombie-fighter Ash in the EVIL DEAD films. Koenig and Campbell play NASA astronauts who explore an ancient alien spacecraft in Earth orbit, bringing back a petrified human corpse and a mysterious red seed-shaped metallic object for further study. The alien artifact turns out to be a machine intelligence

which uses parts of the corpse and NASA's technology to construct a biomechanical body that threatens to break out of NASA's fortified research facility.

Ragsdale said he got the idea of casting Koenig after reading *Newsweek's* 1987 cover story on STAR TREK. "[We were trying] to think of a lead character who was not that expensive and who would have a recognizable name," said Ragsdale. "If he was in the genre, that would be a bonus." Ragsdale contacted Koenig initially at the American Film Market that year in Los Angeles and Koenig liked the script. After contacting Koenig's agent, Ragsdale had his leading man. Bruce Campbell, a friend of Ragsdale's and Dyke's from previous movies produced in Michigan (Dyke's Magic Lantern company contributed to the effects of EVIL DEAD II), had been cast as the secondary lead almost from the project's inception.

MOONTRAP's associate producer is John Cameron, part of a Michigan "brat pack" consisting of school friends Campbell and EVIL DEAD director Sam Raimi, who grew up together making 8mm films. Cameron, an alumnus of Dyke's Magic Lantern productions, studied film at New York University and has worked on THE ROSARY MURDERS, EVIL DEAD II, and COLLISION COURSE, which recently filmed in Detroit for DEG. The youthful Cameron, 29 years old, keeps a tight reign on the purse-strings of MOONTRAP's low budget. For economy, most of the film's interior sets have been built in warehouses at the production's Troy, Michigan base, including one of the moon's surface. A contemporary





**THE KAALIUN** strides down a corridor of NASA's observation room. The alien was designed for the film by B. K. Taylor and built by Gary Jones and his Detroit-based Acme Special Effects company. Inset: In the film the robot springs from a seed-like alien artifact found in Earth orbit with a human corpse thousands of years old. The robots generate themselves from whatever technology is available.



setting allows the film to utilize actual NASA space footage, with Michigan's Fermi II nuclear power plant standing in for a NASA control room, and Detroit's Club Taboo for a bar scene.

Ragsdale's script for *MOONTRAP*, his first screen credit, co-authored with Dyke, consists of three acts. The first takes place on Earth at the NASA base; the second on the moon; and finally, the escape back to Earth for the conclusion and epilogue. On the moon, the astronauts find the remains of a lost human civilization and more of the dreaded alien machines, called Kaaliuns. Leigh Lombardi plays Mera, the film's female lead, found by the astronauts in suspended animation and revived to join in the adventure. Ragsdale said Lombardi was obtained for the film through a casting call in Los Angeles. "We were going after a certain look for the character because she does not speak any English until almost the end of the movie," said Ragsdale. "She needed to have a Eurasian quality because she's the only survivor of this lost colony from Earth, over 14,000 years old." *MOONTRAP* is trying for a PG-13 rating despite a semi-nude love scene between Koenig and Lombardi.

Koenig, who often complained about the insignificance of his role in *STAR TREK* is understandably pleased with his part in *MOONTRAP*, his first starring role. Koenig portrays an aging astronaut who missed out on the space program because he was "... too young in the '60s

and too old in the '80s." Despite the starring role, Koenig has not escaped the science fiction genre that trapped him so long in *STAR TREK*. About that Koenig waxes philosophical. "All we are doing is changing the costumes and the milieu," he said. "The behavior is universal. Whether I am working on an afternoon soap opera or a cops and robbers whodunit, behavior is behavior. They are going for a sense of reality in this movie. In the face of something fantastic, I think you have to achieve as much reality as possible."

Koenig's co-star, Bruce Campbell, plays Koenig's partner, a smart-alecky younger astronaut. With two *EVIL DEAD* movies under his belt, Campbell, who calls himself a "self-taught" actor, is relieved to be playing an intelligent character instead of an idiot-type who is just surviving on instinct. Together Koenig and Campbell team up with Lombardi to fight Kaaliun monsters, engage in some spectacular space visuals and show us that we still haven't seen all there is to see on the moon. □

Robert Dyke directs astronaut Walter Koenig as he explores an ancient, abandoned base found on the moon.



O N T H E S E T O F:

# POLTERGEIST III

After the critical and boxoffice failures of POLTERGEIST II, director Gary Sherman calls the shots differently on this second sequel—eschewing modern postproduction opticals for some on-line razzle dazzle!

by Sharon Williams

POLTERGEIST III is 41 year-old Gary Sherman's movie from beginning to end. He has put his stamp on every facet of MGM's third round with the pesky spectres and in doing so, he's taking a big chance. Sherman directed POLTERGEIST III, co-wrote the script with Brian Taggart, and had a heavy hand in the film's conceptualization and design. It's a gamble for which Sherman can get the lion's share of the credit—or the blame.

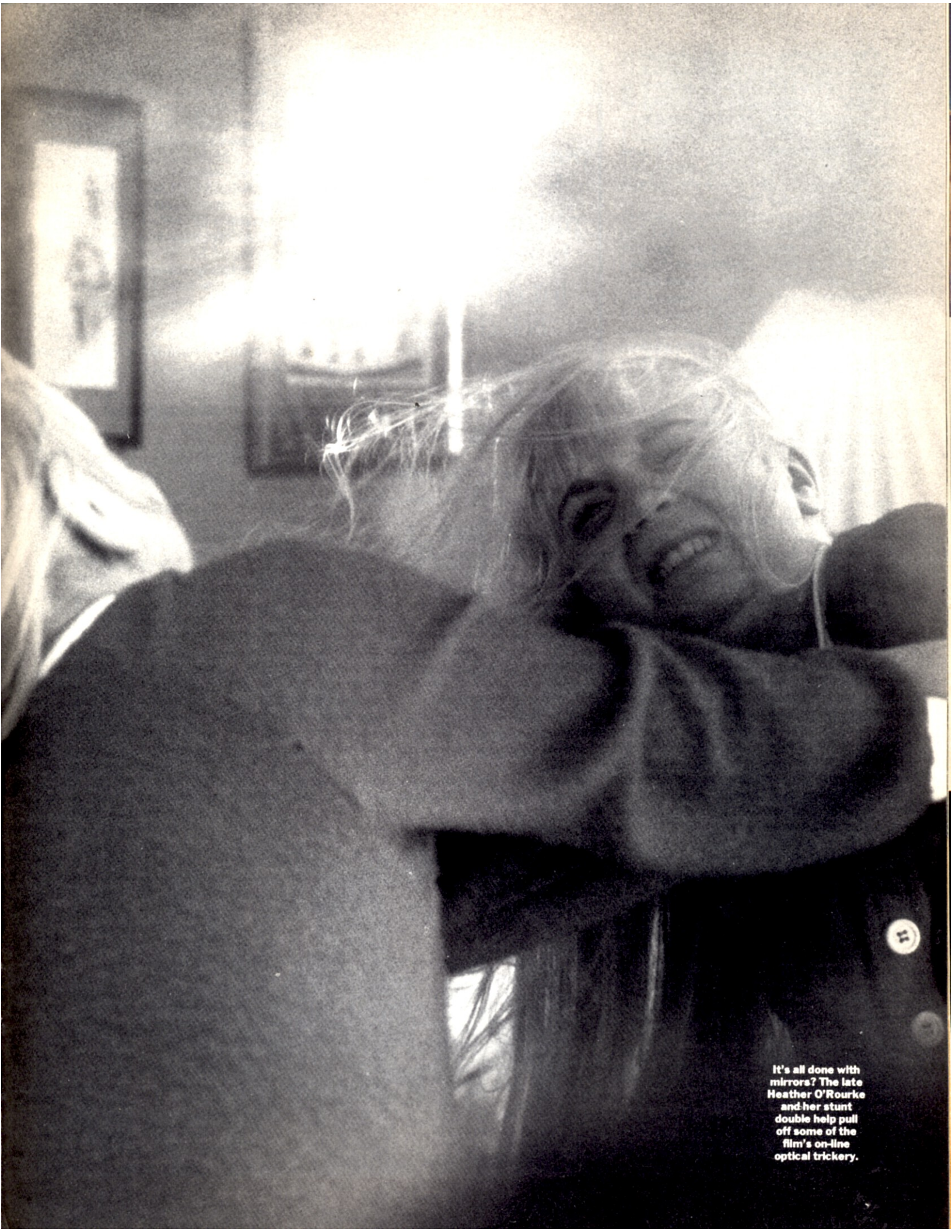


Director Gary Sherman on the set of POLTERGEIST III.

Sherman began his filmmaking career in the mid '60s, while studying at the Illinois Institute of Technology and working part-time at a Chicago optical house. Next, he produced several "rockumentaries," using his optical knowhow to create the first psychedelic video for a group called The Seeds.

So what does a director with a solid optical background do when asked to helm the second sequel in a series of films noted for glittering special effects? He accepts the assignment and proceeds with POLTERGEIST III—without using postproduction opticals!

MGM had planned to make POLTERGEIST III all along, despite the second film's critical panning and immense budget overruns. The trick was to find the right director and story for Steven Spielberg's legacy. They approached Gary Sherman, fresh from the action thriller WANTED: DEAD OR ALIVE, and known to horror genre fans for both RAW MEAT and his 1981 effort, DEAD AND BURIED. Sherman was skeptical, but found the idea of doing the sequel intriguing. "I asked MGM what preconceived ideas they had for the story," explained Sherman, "but they really didn't have any. So, I thought about it for awhile. POLTERGEIST had a suburban setting, and POLTERGEIST II was basically rural. I thought it was time to use an urban backdrop. A haunted high-rise is something new. And, when you think of skyscrapers, you think of lots of chrome, glass and mirrors. The mirror idea gave definition to the "other side." There are lots of legends and superstitions surrounding mirrors, too. POLTERGEIST III is a little like *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, but more Lewis Carroll than Walt Disney. It's kind of creepy."



It's all done with mirrors? The late Heather O'Rourke and her stunt double help pull off some of the film's on-line optical trickery.

Creeping into those early discussions with the studio was also the subject of budget. "POLTERGEIST II doubled its budget," Sherman admitted. "It had all those optical effects, many of which were ineffective. I told MGM that I thought I could come up with a way to write and produce the picture for \$10 million. We almost made it and there is not a single optical effect in the film."

Mirrors play an important part in both the story and production of POLTERGEIST III; in particular, mirror images. "Much of the film," Sherman said, "was done on double sets. In fact, a lot of different tricks are used even in one scene. I had to figure out how to shoot a scene on the floor as an optical. I did it with optical flats, which are just clear pieces of glass that have extremely high polished surfaces and let light pass through fairly undisturbed from one side. You can bring a second image in on the surface. We used all kinds of mirrors with different glass, that is basically the same type you would use on a beam splitting optical printer, in order to double images.

"The decision not to use opticals in this film," Sherman continued, "was actually a creative one. My background is in opticals. Because I'm so familiar with the process, I just decided to do the opticals on the set rather than in postproduction. The result is that the entire film is first generation. It's not three generations down the line having gone through inter-poses, inter-negs, and opticals. Every time you take it another generation, you degrade the image that much more. Every time you put it through a lens, which you have to do with opticals, there's a loss of resolution, of definition. I didn't want to degrade the image. It made shooting the picture that much more difficult in terms of production. In fact, our set construction probably cost us as much as the opticals would have. Even very simple scenes became extremely complex in terms of rehearsal and finally getting the right shot."

POLTERGEIST III began principal photography in Chicago last April, where we find Carol Anne Freeling (Heather O'Rourke) now living with an Aunt and Uncle, Pat and Bruce Gardner (Nancy Allen and Tom Skerrit), and Bruce's daughter Donna.

Shooting utilized some of Chicago's poshest exteriors as well as a local factory converted into a soundstage for interior scenes. According to Sherman, planning the interior shots, with their complex floor effects, was an exercise in organization. "There is not a shot in the film that wasn't storyboarded," stated Sherman, "and I did it myself. By doing the effects on the stage we had to keep transforming the sets: removing walls and replacing them with mirrors, and then replacing those with glass of varying densities, reflective quali-

"After the film comes out, the plan is—mine and the studio's—to publish a how-to book. We did a lot of stuff that is extremely difficult to do, even when it's explained."

—Gary Sherman—

ties and different degrees of light transmission. So, I had to conceptualize exactly how I was going to shoot the scenes, shot for shot. We couldn't film it the normal way and we couldn't wing it either because shots within the same sequence, and not in any specific order, had to be done on different sets even though it was the same scene.

"I ended up having to work out floor plans, shot plans, and shot lists for each scene so I came up with a color-coding system for the script. Each shot, whether it was filmed on a normal set, a mirrored set, a glass set, a double set, 45° mirrors, or 45°

optical flat, was highlighted in the script with a different color. I did the same thing with the storyboards. Then I sat down with my editor, Ross Albert, and we talked about every possible kind of shot we would need to make sure that each sequence was cuttable. Cal Accord, my mechanical effects guy, was also involved because POLTERGEIST III doesn't have special effects in the standard definition. There are makeup and mechanical effects, but the special effects are what I designed and shot on the set."

Unfortunately, Sherman is hesitant to explain exactly how those effects were accomplished, particularly those involving the double sets. "I would rather not talk too much about them," stated Sherman, "because I think if people know how we did the double sets it will take away from the film's impact when they see it. After the film comes out, the plan is—mine and the studio's—to publish a kind of how-to book. There are a lot of people who are going to be upset about what we did on this film. We did a lot of stuff that is extremely difficult to do, even when it's explained."

Sherman, however, did hint at some of the details involved when shooting on the double sets. Said Sherman, "A lot of people were involved in the production—production designer Paul Eads, head of the makeup department Jerry Turnage, and wardrobe was also involved because many times the cast was wearing reverse clothing. (Watch for "Adidas" spelled backwards on sneakers.) Instead of shirts buttoning on the left, they would button on the right. Everybody had to have wigs made, too, so that hairstyles were the opposite direction. If someone naturally had a mole on one side of their face, makeup had to cover that mole and put it

The on-line opticals of POLTERGEIST III: Nancy Allen (foreground), her mime double (center), and Nathan Davis behind a pane of glass and backed by a set which is identical to the one Allen faces.



on the other side. The detailing in *POLTERGEIST III* is immense. That was what was fun though. The thing is, I don't know if the audience will even see it all. There are scenes that I have showed to some professionals in the business and they are astounded.

"There is a scene," Sherman continued, "where a cup is thrown at a mirror from the back side. It only flies in the mirror image. A hand comes out of the desk in Dr. Seaton's office, grabs a cup off of his desk and throws it at the mirror, but only in the mirror side. On the real side, nothing comes out but the mirror shatters. And, as the cup flies toward the mirror, you see only one cup. In reality, you should see two converging images. But, in this scene, there's only one cup, it hits the mirror, and

it breaks. Then we see what's behind the mirror, which is an observation room with three startled people in it. It was all done in one piece and nobody can figure out how the hell we did it."

When asked about what he had been doing in *POLTERGEIST III*, Tom Skerritt paused and then answered, slowly, "I found myself running, then hanging out over a 100-story building in the middle of the night with 50 mph gusts of wind blowing, and wondering why the hell I was there. I've also been chased by frozen cars on the second level of a parking garage and almost drowned in a meat locker. Sometimes," Skerritt said shaking his head, "I'll stand back and look at this business I'm in. On this film the first AD called the wrap one night and then announced the next

days work in terms of—'Ah, tomorrow we will start on the sphincter [breathing] door, followed by the jelly birth, and then we will do the flooding of the food locker with the breathing lamb carcass. There's no sense of reality.'"

Unreality is the name of the game for the special makeup effects people who worked on *POLTERGEIST III*. Topping the list was Dick Smith, the Academy Award-winning artist whose subtle aging makeups, such as Max Von Sydow's in *THE EXORCIST* and Marlon Brando's in *THE GODFATHER*, have made him a legend. Smith claims he was basically a consultant on the film, there only to make the producer, Barry Bernardi, more comfortable. Smith's hand, however, was everywhere, trouble shooting, giving sug-

## In Remembrance: Heather O'Rourke, 1975 - 1988

By Sharon Williams

The blue-eyed pixyish blonde from San Diego, California was five years old when she made her movie debut as Carol Anne Freeling in *POLTERGEIST*. Heather was nine when she did *POLTERGEIST II*, and twelve years old when she filmed *POLTERGEIST III*. In September 1987 she started 7th grade. She died unexpectedly the following February.

Heather was discovered by Steven Spielberg in the MGM commissary while she was lunching with her mother and sister, Tammy, who was filming *PENNY FROM HEAVEN*. Heather was considerably more interested in eating her lunch than talking to the stranger who approached their table. She passed the first interview when she giggled at a pink stuffed pig and fish instead of being frightened, but Spielberg still felt Heather was too young. He was actually looking for someone at least six years old. That didn't phase Heather a bit. Actually, she just wanted to see her sister making a movie. The next day, however, one of Spielberg's assistants asked Heather to come back and to bring along a scary storybook. She did. After reading some scenes from the book, Spielberg asked her to scream . . . a lot. Heather did that too, but after awhile she began to cry, complaining that she had had enough. The very next day Spielberg told Heather that she had the part of Carol Anne.

As an actor, Heather was very proud of the fact that she



Heather O'Rourke pictured against the Chicago skyline of *POLTERGEIST III*.

never used a stunt double on *POLTERGEIST III*, only a mime double because, she explained, "I couldn't be in two places at once."

During our interview, Heather sat quietly waiting for her call to the set. She was in her third stage "Kane" makeup and perhaps slightly self-conscious talking to a stranger under such circumstances. It wasn't evident. She had been through all this before. Each question was considered and then answered softly. Her poise was quite startling.

Heather made a little artistic comparison between the three *POLTERGEIST* films. "Gary Sherman and Steven Spielberg are really great directors. The director of the second film (Brian Gibson) was English. It was a very disorganized movie," she stated with emphasis, "we would get only one scene done a day. *POLTER-*

*GEIST III* is more like the first one." Heather wanted someday to be a director herself.

Nancy Allen credited her with being a calming influence on the set. Zelda Rubenstein, who worked with Heather on all three films, felt a close, emotional bond with her co-star. *POLTERGEIST III* director Gary Sherman became close to both Heather and her family, and served as a pall bearer at Heather's funeral. It was much more than a director/actor relationship. "During the first rehearsal, all the actors sat down around the table and opened their scripts. Except Heather," said Sherman. "She had already memorized the entire script. Questions would come up and Heather would pop in saying, 'No, no, in that scene . . .'" and she would start explaining it to everybody. We all got a great kick out of it.

"People would sit around

with Heather talking about the scenes just as if she was another adult actor. Heather had as much dialogue as some of the adult actors, too. She had to do a lot of acting in this film, not just reacting like she did in the first two. In fact, her role is really the main thrust of the film. Heather was convinced that she would get an Academy Award for this picture."

The most frequently asked question, after Heather's death, was why didn't anyone notice that the child was ill. "Heather wasn't ill at the time," Sherman stated. "Just before we did the picture, Heather had a parasite that she picked up from some bad water when her parents were out camping. She even failed the cast physical, but this was very early on, before we had even started preproduction. Her parents were very concerned so we took Heather to a specialist. It was a common parasite and she was put on medication. "Heather was completely cured by the time we started filming," Sherman said.

"The Sunday before she died Heather had stomach cramps. They didn't know what was causing it. Her intestines burst on Monday morning. It didn't come from any long-term illness at all. It was a congenital birth defect, an intestinal blockage that no one knew about. I don't know exactly what the term is for it, but Heather died of toxic shock.

"It was very sad. Heather had been signed by a major agent after seeing footage from *POLTERGEIST III*. Her career was just about to open wide up." □

gestions offering solutions. He also worked very closely with Sherman on conceptualizing the film. Two Smith proteges, John Caglione and Doug Drexler (THE HUNGER, ALTERED STATES) are actually credited as the heads of the special makeup department. Also working with Caglione and Drexler was Stephen Dupuis, the Academy Award winner for Jeff Goldblum's makeup in THE FLY, and Kevin Haney, another Dick Smith find.

While POLTERGEIST III isn't exactly loaded with loathsome creatures, there are several key effects indicative of the film: Carol Anne's transformation, the mummified human forms of various principals, particularly the diminutive psychic Tangina (Zelda Rubenstein), as well as the devilish Reverend Kane's makeup.

The role of Reverend Henry Kane had been created by the late Julian Beck in POLTERGEIST II. Since Sherman opted to continue the character in his screenplay, the situation presented a unique problem. Where to find an actor who resembled Beck. The task fell to Dick Smith. His choice was a Chicago actor, Nathan Davis, who at least had a facial structure similar to Beck's. With a generous dose of makeup magic, the effect is quite startling—even more sinister looking than the original Kane.

The makeup for Kane was first designed by Smith, Caglione and Drexler, with the day-to-day application taken over by Dupuis who also added his own touches. They began the process by making a life mask of Davis, using a substance called alginate—the same material a dentist uses to make impressions of teeth. The alginate is spatulated on the actor's face and allowed to jell. When the material is removed and filled with plaster, the result

**“I found myself running, then hanging out over a 100-story building in the middle of the night with 50 mph gusts of wind blowing and wondering why the hell I was there.”**

**—Tom Skerritt—**

is an exact duplicate of the subject's face and the makeup man works from this to design the appliances used for the transformation.

When the design was completed, it took approximately four hours to transform Davis into Kane and included eight foam rubber appliances, contact lenses, lower dentures and a hair piece. All were kept carefully in boxes in the makeup room. The real magic, however, came with the subtle blendings of Davis own skin with the appliances. “When you put the appliances on,” explained Caglione, “each one has several inches of extra, extremely

thin material which will blend into the actor's face. They are so thin that when you wet your fingertips and press it against the edge, it disappears. It's perfect. Each foam rubber piece was sculpted on Davis' mold so they fit every little crack and wrinkle that he has on his face. Each piece was made to fit into one certain point. You just have to make sure you've found the right spot.

“It's a little tricky,” Caglione continued, “because you have to texture each piece that you sculpt; something like duping a film. With each generation you lose a certain amount of detail. So, when you sculpt you have to over-texture in order to compensate.”

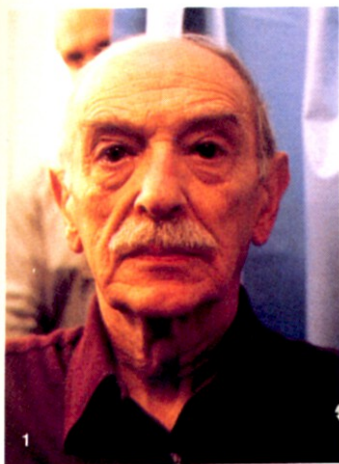
Audiences will definitely notice Carol Anne's mutating makeups too. In the story Carol Anne looks in a mirror and each time she sees a progressively worse vision of herself. She looks like Kane, but only in her reflected image, not in reality.

“I actually tried to talk Gary Sherman out of this effect,” added Smith. “It's very tricky to take a small person, a child, and put an adult face on it. It can actually be ludicrous. That was my big concern. Also, it's extremely difficult to make one person look like another. If the face that you are doing has outstanding characteristics it's easier than if the face looks kind of normal. You can always caricature it a little bit. But, here we have a situation that is not quite that distinct. It was decided,” Smith went on, “to spare Heather the ordeal of sitting for hours having this heavy makeup applied, so two young substitutes were found. That proved to be very fortuitous because to make Heather look really like Kane would have been virtually impossible, given her full cheeks and the general shape of her face. As it turned out, the two young girls that were chosen for stages four and five of the makeup worked out fine. The girl with the thinner face lent herself very well to the process and everyone seems happy with the results. I haven't seen it on film, but apparently it is frightening and not at all funny. I'm glad it worked out that way. You actually couldn't quite anticipate how it would go.”

Some of the most interesting effects in POLTERGEIST III involve mummified forms. For example, there is a scene where Donna is “birthed” out of Tangina's remains. “We shot Donna's emergence,” Sherman stated, “from six different angles on three different sets. One of them was of a small table-top situation for the close-up of Donna's hand coming through Tangina's face. We must have used a couple dozen of Tangina's dried faces for that one. They were a sculpture that Dick Smith did of Zelda taken from a life mask of her and it was a very difficult process. What he had to do was to reduce Zelda's face. It's always easier to take a life mask and build on it. It's still difficult, but easier. What Dick had to do was to determine

Zelda Rubenstein returns as the diminutive psychic Tangina. Rubenstein, flanked by Nancy Allen and Tom Skerritt, looks on helplessly as Heather O'Rourke is consumed by the spincter (breathing) door.





**THE KANE MAKEUP.** Dick Smith chose Nathan Davis to replace the late Julian Beck as Reverend Kane. Smith proteges John Caglione and Doug Drexler headed special makeup design on the film. 1) Davis, with contact lenses in place, steels himself for the rigors of prosthetic facial recontouring. 2) The finished product. In creating this makeup, Dick Smith blocked out his concept for Kane then had John Caglione refine and finish the sculptures. Daily application of Davis' makeup was the job of Academy Award-winner Stephen Dupuis (*THE FLY*). 3) Another of the film's eerie makeup effects. 4) Gary Sherman wanted Davis to mummify before the panavision lens without undercranking the camera or using stop-motion. This was accomplished by placing a micro thin wax shell of Davis' face over the corpse-like articulated visage, sculpted by Dick Smith (5). When subjected to 600,000 BTU's of heat the shell would collapse and disintegrate (6-8).

what Zelda's skeletal structure is like under her flesh, and then figure out how it would look if she had been totally dehydrated, all the fluids taken out of her body."

Fortunately, Smith was already familiar with people who look like a stick of beef jerky. "I pitched in to make the shriveled face of Tangina," Smith explained, "using a technique that I did once before on *THE HUNGER*. I took a cast of Zelda's face, and reproduced it in gelatin in order to create a shrunken, withered image of her face. It wasn't done so much with sculpture as it was with a little trick of mine. The actual time involved was several times greater than I would have anticipated in making that particular head. But, then,

that's typical of this kind of work."

Donna's emergence also involved the full form of Tangina, and for this little bit of movie legerdemain, Smith and company actually cooked up a crumbly corpse. "There are really two forms used," said Smith. "They look the same but are made of different substances. The one that Donna breaks through is made largely of pie crust, an ingenious idea of Doug Drexler's. We kept trying to think of what substance we might be able to mold and would still be crumbly enough and give the proper effect. For *THE HUNGER* we used a brittle wax formulation backed up with some other materials, but we didn't think it was quite appropriate for this job. Then Drexler said, 'Hey, how about pie crust?' Well, that sounded great, but it turned out that baking pie crust in a mold of a head, and still having sufficient detail, was not as easy as it sounded.

"First of all, to bake pie crust you have to have a temperature of over 400°," continued Smith. "So the mold has to withstand that temperature too. Normally we don't use such high temperatures. Foam latex is cooked at 200°. Since it was going to be so fragile we also had to have a mold that was extremely soft and flexible, one that could be peeled away from this brittle pie crust. They tried using a silicone mold, which was rubbery and soft, but when they put the pie crust in and baked it in an

ordinary oven, the crust got greasy and fell out of the mold. It just wouldn't stay put. Then we tried to bake it in a microwave oven. That seemed to work pretty well. It didn't heat up the silicon mold, but it did bake the crust. Still, there was the problem of getting the detail, the wrinkled skin. John and Doug couldn't seem to get it just right. So, they decided to fall back on the brittle wax solution. What they did was to make a very thin wax skin to get all the detail, and then back that up with pie crust. It was a mixture and improvised alteration of the original scheme which finally worked very effectively. We even used a prepared pie crust so we wouldn't complicate things. It's best to keep things simple. It's complex enough."

Sherman was delighted with this little macabre bake-off. "I became so fascinated with Tangina's dehydrated remains that we also did one of Bruce and Donna for the scene where Pat comes into the ice storm at the end. She's being chased through the storm by Kane, falls and finds Bruce's and Donna's remains. Then I decided to change the ending. Tangina actually accomplished Kane's death so I thought we should see Kane transformed into one of those dehydrated remains. It all became much more complicated than what we initially were going to do, but Dick, John and Doug came up with something incredible." □

# KILLER KLOWNS

F R O M O U T E R S P A C E

**Mattes by Mark Sullivan gave all the clowning around a big-budget look.**

*By Ron Magid*

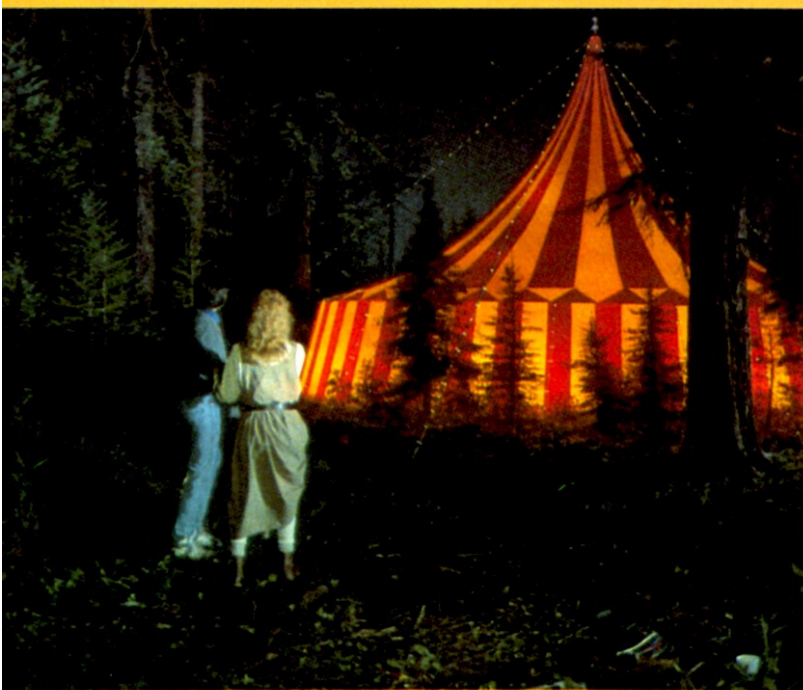
How do you bring in a movie that looks like \$10 million for just over \$2.1 million? The Chiodo brothers—Stephen, Charlie, and Edward—asked for a little help from their friends on KILLER KLOWNS FROM OUTER SPACE (18:2/3:25). To realize the mad, spectacular look of the Klowns' spaceship, the Chiodos called on matte painter Mark Sullivan, who created the eye-opening prehistoric vistas of HOUSE II (18:2/3:104).

The Chiodos, the makeup artists behind the CRITTERS films, created a stir earlier this year when they screened KILLER KLOWNS, their first independent production, at the American Film Market. Trans World Entertainment, which backed the film, conducted favorable test screenings in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and Colorado Springs, Colorado, and plans to release the film regionally this summer. The film's wacky plot—college kids discover aliens who look like circus clowns—is directed with verve by Stephen Chiodo. That and the film's eye-opening visuals give it the potential to become a sleeper hit.

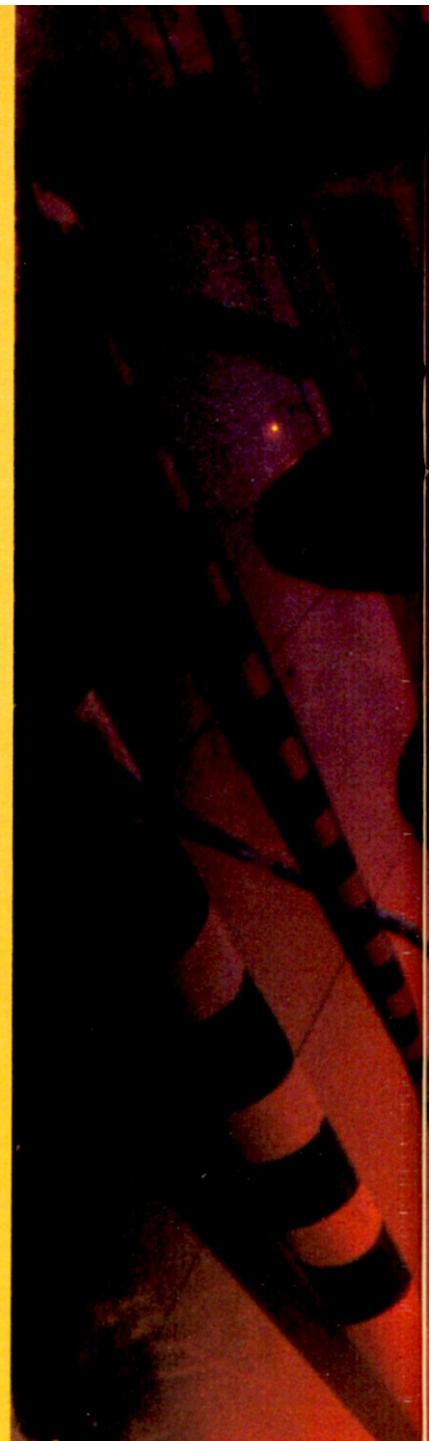
Sullivan worked on three matte shots of the film's "Big Top" spaceship. In the film it burrows itself into the ground deep enough to disguise its top as a circus tent. Sullivan painted the Big Top ship for the scene where it is discovered by a col-

lege couple, exposed onto the original camera negative of the actors filmed on location in Santa Cruz. Sullivan also painted the crater left behind after the ship departs in a scene where it is investigated by the local sheriff.

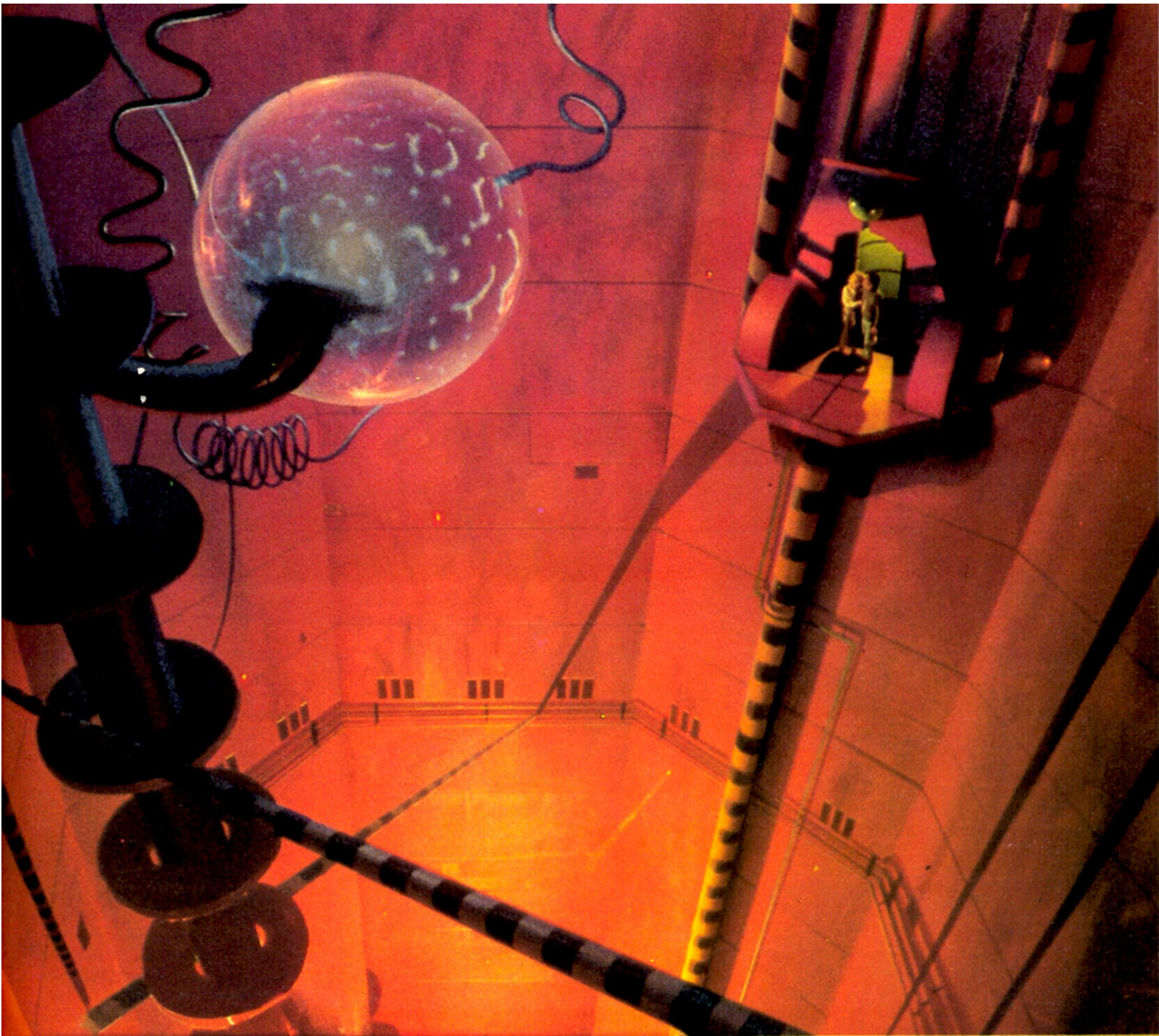
Sullivan's most spectacular effect is his painting of the interior of the Big Top ship's power chamber as it gets explored by enterprising youths who have snuck on board. Describing his painting as "something Dr. Seuss might have designed for FORBIDDEN PLANET," Sullivan's art is complete with a pulsing orb reminiscent of the matte of the spaceship interior



The Klowns' spaceship burrows into the ground deep enough so that its top appears disguised as a circus tent. Sullivan's mattes of the ship (above) and the crater it leaves (below) were exposed onto original camera negative of the location.







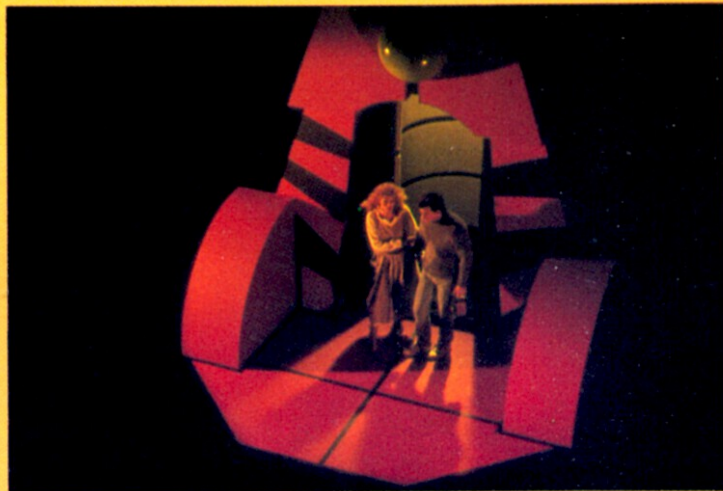
seen in 1953's *THIS ISLAND, EARTH*. For this scene the live-action footage of the actors on a small spaceship set was reduced on an optical printer and laid over the matte painting. On another pass, animation was added to make the orb look like it was generating electricity.

The Chiodos called in other favors to make *KILLER KLOWNS* look so good. Gene Warren, Jr., and Leslie Huntley of *Fantasy II* provided the optical effects. Gene Rizzardi supervised the film's effects work, which was designed for the Chiodos by Phillip Foreman. "In the last seven years,

as makeup artists, we've worked with some of the finest people in the effects industry," said Charlie Chiodo, who co-wrote the film with Stephen, and co-produced it with both brothers. "We couldn't have done this film without their backup in all areas."

Sullivan said he enjoyed letting his imagination soar on the project. "It was fun to work on putting some wacked-out loony designs on screen," he said. "But the lack of money and time restrictions were a bit frustrating." Unlike the one seen on screen, that, at least according to Sullivan, is the "same old story." □

Sullivan described his art for the interior of the *Klowns Big Top* spaceship as "something Dr. Seuss might have designed for *FORBIDDEN PLANET*." The footage of exploring teenagers (below) was reduced and composited on an optical printer.



# ALIEN From L.A.

**Cannon Films dispatched director Albert Pyun back to the center of the Earth.**

By Kris Gilpin

Cannon Films' ALIEN FROM L.A., which opened earlier this year, began its cinematic life as a twist on a genre classic. "I was originally hired by Cannon 2½ years ago to do a remake of JOURNEY TO



Albert Pyun

THE CENTER OF THE EARTH," said director Albert Pyun, a native of Hawaii and director of the independent hit SWORD AND THE SORCERER (1982). Instead, Cannon handed the project to director Rusty Lemorande, although it had "a few problems," according to Pyun (see opposite). To make it up to Pyun, Cannon let him film his own version as ALIEN FROM L.A., which Pyun termed "a type of counter-culture look at JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH, dealing with an individual from our world getting caught in a police state at the center of the Earth."

In Pyun's film, written by Judith Berg and Sandra Berg, *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit model Kathy Ireland searches for her explorer-archeologist father (Richard Haines); their family name, Saknussem, is an in-joke reference to the original film's basis in Jules Verne, as is the fact that Ireland carries a duck purse with her into the center of the earth (Hans carried a goose in the 1959 Henry Levin version for Fox).

Although most of the film

takes place underground, Cannon decided to shoot ALIEN FROM L.A. in South Africa as a political gesture of friendliness, according to Pyun. Cannon is headed by two Israelis, Menahem Golan and Yoram Globus and the Israelis

and south Africans have had on-going trade relations for some time now. The choice of location also stemmed from Cannon's desire to use blocked funds.

"It's very difficult for people to get their money out of South Africa now because of the way the government has clamped down," said Pyun. "Cannon asked us if we'd mind making a film there, the trade-off being



Which way to the center of the Earth? Lochner De Kock (l) and William Moses point the way for *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit girl Kathy Ireland in ALIEN FROM L.A.

that I could make anything I wanted. I went down there to see if, morally, I could do it. After talking with a lot of filmmakers there, we found that there are a lot of innocent people hurting, and no free trade of art and commerce and ideas." Nevertheless, Pyun agreed to work in Johannesburg. It was Cannon's desire that no American dollars would enter the country; the film was wholly financed and crewed by South Africans.

The underground scenes of ALIEN FROM L.A. were filmed three miles down in gold mines, and at gold dumps,

where the residue of mining operations create a spectacular, non-reflective moon-like landscape very unusual in appearance. Pyun said it was creepy to shoot in the mines, using the fastest elevators in the world to begin their daily journey down below. "It took about 10 minutes to get down into the mines, and those elevators were flying," he said. "Your ears would pop. It was pretty eerie knowing you were that far into the earth."

Makeup effects for the film were created by Pamela Peitzman (who worked with Pyun on SWORD AND THE SOR-

The underground civilization of Atlantis, filmed at diamond mine dumps in South Africa which provided a lunar look.



CERER), and included large ears and exaggerated foreheads for trolls played by South African school kids, and elaborate mud-hair sculptures. "Since there is no sun in the underground cities Ireland's character journeys through while in search of her father, everyone who lives down there is totally pale. And we wanted the idea that, if you lived in the center of the earth, instead of the smog you'd have mud constantly in the air, so Pamela had to constantly work all these flaking mud designs over everybody's face. Texturally, it was really interesting," Peitzman was in charge of making up two or three hundred extras nightly.

Since there are no stuntmen in Africa, most of the film's action is traditional fistfights and chases, and the film is "much more of a character's odyssey through a very strange wonderland," said Pyun. "As the movie goes on, this 1984-ish, police state mentality begins to encroach upon her and recognize her as an alien in their society, and immediately tries to eradicate her."

One visual effect in the film, created by Fantasy II, who worked on *THE TERMINATOR*, involved Ireland's fall several miles into the earth's core after accidentally causing a cave-in. The sequence was filmed with split-screen and blue screen mattes. A matte painting establishes the lost city of Atlantis. A vast, hellish wasteland seen at the earth's center also used opticals. "The smoke and fire we had raging all the time was laid in optically, which was really tricky," said Pyun. "They did a great job, though."

One of the colorful characters Ireland meets in her adventures in the truly down under is the owner of a bar, played by beautiful Australian actress Linda Kerridge, who played Marilyn Monroe to Dennis Christopher's warped psycho in *FADE TO BLACK*. Kerridge first worked with Pyun a couple years ago on a \$200,000 rock & roll/space comedy for Empire Productions entitled *VICIOUS LIPS* (aka *LUNAR MADNESS*), which has yet to be released. "That one's really off-beat," said Pyun. □

## ... meanwhile, Cannon shelves its other JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH

By Steve Biodrowski

Which way to the Center of the Earth?

For the Cannon Group's updated film version of Jules Verne's novel *JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH*, the answer may be the long and winding road.

Principal photography wrapped in July 1986 for a Christmas release. To no one's surprise, the film failed to make that date, which was always overly optimistic, and the film was pushed back to February 1987. But February turned out to be equally optimistic, and the release was pushed further back—first to summer, then to fall, then to an unspecified time next year. Currently the film is not even on Cannon's publicity list of upcoming releases.

What happened?

Late last year, first-time director Rusty Lemorande presented a rough-cut of the film to Cannon executives. The purpose of the screening was to determine how much work needed to be done in post-production—specifically in regards to enhancing the in-camera special effects photographed during principal photography. When Menachem Golan and Yoram Globus saw Lemorande's rough cut "they weren't real happy," according to Albert Pyun. "The film lacked a beginning; it wasn't a complete story."

Lemorande had been counting on the screening to convince the Cannon executives to provide more money for additional shooting. The original opening for the film took place in a hotel room decorated for Christmas

Director Rusty Lemorande.



(to tie in with the film's planned Christmas 1986 release date); when the film missed its original release, that opening was dropped. Although enthusiastic about using glass mattes and in-camera effects, Lemorande hoped to be able to redo the effects in post-production, if necessary. And planned footage of Hermione Gingold was never shot. Lemorande seemed to think he could put his film together piecemeal, completing certain portions before moving on to others.

After the screening, the Cannon executives offered the task of completing the film to Albert Pyun. It was a stroke of poetic justice, because Pyun had been set to do his own version of *JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH* before Lemorande approached Cannon with his own script for the project. Pyun accepted but with a very unusual condition:

"I told them I would do it for free if they would let me film my own version for under \$1 million," he said. "I told them it made good business sense to get a full-blown fantasy for under a million."

Cannon agreed, and Pyun spent the next nine months filming *ALIEN FROM L.A.*, his own *JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH*-type story. "It's fairly close to my intended *JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH* in tone—it was meant to be a Saturday matinee serial." He then spent another six months shooting pick-ups and patching up Lemorande's film. "Cannon wanted as much as could be done without spending more money," said Pyun. "That was one of the mandates: no effects shots, although they later allowed me three effects shots in *ALIEN FROM L.A.*" What about the glass shots Lemorande filmed on the set? "I think there was one left in," said Pyun.

Though rumors suggested that Lemorande had problems with special effects, the decision to shelve the project seemed to stem not so much from any technical difficulties as from Lemorande's inexperience as a director. Lemorande could not be reached for comment. He said during filming that although he originated the project, he never intended to direct it: "This sort



Paul Carafotes and Nicola Cowper fall asleep in a cavern of giant worms. The filmmakers used dyed snakes.

of happened as a situation where both Cannon and myself were interested in doing a remake of *JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH*," said Lemorande. "I'd read an announcement that Dino DeLaurentiis was going to remake *20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA*, and I thought it's clever to redo Jules Verne but there's a more interesting one to do. The one that appealed to me was *JOURNEY*."

"When Cannon elected to proceed, I just went and wrote the script myself as opposed to finding a writer. I didn't intend to direct it. They said, 'We want your script, and we want you to direct.' I said, 'Well, wait. I can give you a script, but I don't need to direct it.' I owe it to them: they sort of pushed me off the shore and said go."

But what about the problems inherent in choosing such an ambitious feature as his directing debut? "I try to look at them as challenges," said Lemorande during filming. "When someone buys the biggest jigsaw puzzle, they're buying either the biggest problem or the biggest challenge. When you're left to do a thing like this, if you don't look at it like an interesting puzzle to solve, you'll just not solve it."

One of the challenges that turned out to be a problem was attempting to complete the

continued on page 60

# REVIEWS

## Intellectual shocker from the author of *THE WICKER MAN*

### ABSOLUTION

A Trans World Entertainment release of an Elliott Kastner production, in association with Denis Holt. 1988. Director, Anthony Page. Producers, Elliott Kastner & Danny O'Donovan. Executive producers, George Pappas & Alan Cluer. Director of photography, Herbert Smith. Editor, Peter Holt. Art Director, Andrew Saunders. Set designer, Terry Parr. Costume designer, Anne Gainsford. Assistant director, Richard Hoult. Screenplay by Anthony Shaffer.

Father Goddard ..... Richard Burton  
Benji ..... Dominic Guard  
Arthur ..... Dai Bradley  
Blakey ..... Billy Connolly  
Headmaster ..... Andrew Keir

by Douglas Borton

Made in 1979 but unreleased on account of "legal matters" until 1988, *ABSOLUTION*, according to its press release, is a "buried treasure," a "lost masterpiece" featuring one of Richard Burton's finest performances in a role written by the brilliant British screenwriter and playwright Anthony Shaffer (*SLEUTH*, *FRENZY*). The question, naturally, is whether the film lives up to its P.R. or turns out to be one of those lost masterpieces which preserve their reputation only by staying lost.

The film begins with twanging banjo music over a cloud-swept sky. A drifter, Blakey (played by Scottish entertainer Billy Connolly), rides onto the grounds of a Catholic boys' school and takes up residence in the woods. He is immediately contrasted with a domineering priest at the school, Father Goddard (Burton).

Right away the theme of Shaffer's complex psychological drama is made clear. The moralistic purity represented by Goddard, the school, and the Church itself has been shattered by the arrival of a new force, something wild, rebellious, free-spirited, and ultimately deadly. But Goddard, too, is deeply flawed, inclined to a severity which alienates his students and has earned him the less-than-affectionate nickname, "Father God." Indeed, the confusion of identities appears to extend to his own mind.

"You played a filthy practical joke on God," he angrily tells a student at one point.

"It wasn't on God," the boy protests. "It was on you."

"On God!"

Beneath Goddard's godly, ascetic exterior lie passions which he struggles to control and deny.



Father Goddard (Richard Burton) comforts Arthur (Dai Bradley) in *ABSOLUTION*.

The first indication of this inner struggle comes early on, when he watches one of the boys perform a comedy skit in drag. The priest is framed in tight closeup, his sexual arousal and tortured disavowal plainly etched on his face. Later, when he reads a poem about youthful beauty to another young man, we can sense his yearning to reach out and touch, and at the same time his stifling effort at self-control. Control is the essence of Goddard's personality, and the real drama of *ABSOLUTION* is watching that control finally, inexorably crack.

It is in Burton's prize student, Benjamin (Dominic Guard), that the two opposing forces symbolized by Blakey and Goddard are neatly encapsulated. Benji is at once a serious, even brilliant pupil and a bullying, spoiled child. He is delicate, yet dangerous; sensitive but unfeeling. His darker side is most apparent in his relationship with Arthur (Dai Bradley), a partially crippled boy who trails Benji "Like a little lame lamb," only to be cruelly taunted. "I wish you were a piece of dog dirt on my shoe," Benji tells him, "so I could wipe you off on a stone."

Seduced by the amoral Blakey's dark charm, Benji turns against Goddard, his mentor, and initiates the film's central chain of events—events supposedly based on a real-life incident at a school in Germany. The plot hinges on a familiar device, the sacred vow which forbids a priest to reveal what he

hears in confession. Goddard stresses to his class that "there are no circumstances" under which that vow may be broken. Benji, urged on by Blakey, takes advantage of this fact by confessing to a murder. The confession is revealed as a lie, but other confessions follow, and Father Goddard is drawn further and further into a web of deceit, madness, and death.

The intriguing notion of a priest torn between his oath and the confession of a killer has been explored before, notably in Hitchcock's uneven 1953 film *I CONFESS*. But while Hitchcock used the idea as the basis for a fairly standard "wrong man" thriller (with the young priest, played by Montgomery Clift), Shaffer prefers to examine the psychological consequences. He skillfully traces Goddard's gradual deterioration from painfully rigid authoritarianism to mumbling, muttering senescence.

The result is an intriguing film laced with powerful dramatic exchanges and overlaid with an oppressive sense of claustrophobia and mounting terror. The acting is uniformly first-rate. The three supporting players—Dominic Guard (*PICNIC AT HANGING ROCK*), Dai Bradley (*KES*), and Billy Connolly—bring their characters to life with exceptional skill. And the late Richard Burton—who, despite his formidable skills, did have an undeniable tendency to overact—keeps himself, like Father Goddard, under tight

control throughout most of the film, at least until the final scenes.

But this is not to say that there are no *mea culpas* to be said for *ABSOLUTION*. The film, while interesting and worthwhile, is not perfect. For one thing, director Anthony Page (*I NEVER PROMISED YOU A ROSE GARDEN*) seems more adept at handling actors than the camera. His visual style, like that of Robin Hardy in another Shaffer project, *THE WICKER MAN*, is no more than competent. Strong dialogue scenes are often marred by awkward editorial transitions, jarring handheld camera shots, and intrusive zooms.

In addition, the various minor characters—Goddard's fellow teachers and the other students—are barely sketched in. Group scenes, such as the sequences where the boys rise and shine, lack the directorial focus necessary to bring out touches of individual personalities. As a result, the suffocating atmosphere of the school is only suggested, not fully realized.

But the major fault in *ABSOLUTION* lies not with the directing but, oddly, with the script. Quite simply, the film's central plot gimmick, which is intended to shock the viewer when it is finally revealed, is disappointingly predictable. The result is a film which satisfies more in terms of character and performance than through the demonically clever plotting for which Shaffer is best known.

Despite its problems, *ABSOLUTION* deserves its reputation as a buried treasure. Burton's mesmerizing poetry readings alone are worth the price of admission or video rental; his ability to capture spiritual anguish with a flicker of facial expression is inspired. And Anthony Shaffer's thoughtful, intellectually intriguing script provides the kind of literate character study rarely found in today's blockbuster megahits, sequels, prequels, remakes, and rip-offs.

All in all, most viewers will probably confess to liking *ABSOLUTION*—a film which, like at least one of Father Goddard's pupils, makes some serious mistakes but never strays all that far from the right path. □

## Screenwriter Anthony Shaffer on the making of ABSOLUTION

By Alan Jones

On the shelf for nine years, the press notes for ABSOLUTION refer cryptically to "legal matters" which held up the film's release until early this year. Trans World Entertainment, which opened the film in Los Angeles and plans to broaden its release in selected markets, referred questions about the film's history to Dick Delson, publicist for producer Elliot Kastner. Delson, who wrote the notes, said he didn't know the story behind the film's delayed release and added that Kastner wouldn't be interested in discussing it.

John Simon, head of Discovery Films, one of the distributors vying for the rights to release ABSOLUTION, was able to shed a little light on the situation. Simon, who was instrumental in restoring and releasing Anthony Shaffer's THE WICKER MAN (6:3:4), had been negotiating for the film with Kastner and his co-producer Danny O'Donovan for years. "Kastner and O'Donovan had a falling out after the film was made," said Simon. "There was litigation or litigation threatened if either took any action on the film without the other." Simon said that both Kastner and O'Donovan had individually expressed interest in Discovery's offer to release the film, but that the deal always fell apart when they had to discuss it together. O'Donovan

Screenwriter Anthony Shaffer

told Simon that the banks who put up the money to make the film had taken it over.

Shaffer, whose brilliant work on THE WICKER MAN also found a very round-about way into release, told how Kastner came to make ABSOLUTION shortly after filming was completed in 1979. "Kastner is a deal-maker," said Shaffer. "He loves it. I sometimes think he's more interested in making deals than making pictures. He is constantly in the air, flying from London to L.A. One day he said to me, 'I read a script of yours in New York called ABSOLUTION. I'll make it because I thought the script was great.' It was as simple as that. The script had been written in 1970 and it waited eight years for a decision like that."

Richard Burton had brought Shaffer's script to Kastner's attention. Kastner, who has made more than fifty feature films since he left Universal to make HARPER with Paul Newman as an independent producer in 1965, made four other films with Burton, among them EQUUS, written by Shaffer's brother, Peter, and THE MEDUSA TOUCH, a kind of ESP/disaster film. Burton had been offered the ABSOLUTION script by Anthony Shaffer. The actor had fallen in love with the role of Father Goddard, and agreed to work on the film for just a small fraction of his usually high salary, but no one could be found to back the film.

"The cavalry doesn't come at the end of THE WICKER MAN and in ABSOLUTION the priest is thrown into hell in a very real way," said Shaffer to explain why his unconventional horror scripts got passed over. "The British film industry is devoted entirely to the second rate. They have a built-in resistance to any idea that hasn't been tried before in one form or another."

Shaffer, who was a lawyer before becoming a playwright, originally conceived ABSOLUTION as a kind of LA RONDE about privilege, seeking to devise a whodunit about professionals—a lawyer, doctor and priest—who are trapped by their duty to keep a confidence. The idea veered into horror when Shaffer decided to concentrate on the priest and personify the idea behind the oath, "Oh, go to



Burton's priest is drawn into a web of deceit, madness, and death.

hell." Said Shaffer, "It's usually said in a light-hearted manner. But if you take it seriously, it translates as 'I'm going to put you in hell—how can I do that?' I really couldn't if you don't believe in hell." But a priest does, and in Shaffer's intricate plot, Father Goddard is tricked by a false confession into taking a life, being forced to resign, and because he is bound by his oath of confidentiality, being unable to tell anyone why.

Before Burton latched onto the part of Father Goddard, Shaffer had considered Christopher Lee, who went on to star in THE WICKER MAN, which was filmed first, in 1973. "When Lee first read the screenplay he was in his Dracula period, which would have shifted the emphasis of the piece entirely," said Shaffer. "Technically, he could have played it. I'm sure of that. It certainly wasn't written with him in mind."

Following a lengthy casting period, ABSOLUTION was shot on a spartan five-week schedule after a week of rehearsal readings. Anthony Page was

brought in to direct after Douglas Hickox abandoned the project to direct ZULU DAWN instead. Filming took place at an English public school in Shropshire, with interiors shot at Pinewood studios outside London.

Burton added personal touches to his performance. He virtually improvised for the classroom scene where he reads a poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins, one of his favorite poets. Page recalled that due to the actor's phenomenal concentration, filming of the script's devastating, emotion-packed climax was able to be completed in just one day. "Without a doubt, this was one of Burton's favorite roles," said Kastner. "While filming it, he was on the mark, bursting with energy, and truly inspired. He was also very much at peace with himself."

Sadly, Burton never enjoyed seeing his pet project released to the public. The actor passed away August 5, 1984 in Geneva, after suffering a cerebral hemorrhage at his home in Coligny, Switzerland. □



## Isaac Asimov on adventures in avoiding Hollywood

By Daniel M. Kimmel

IF LIGHT YEARS marks the first time someone finally got Isaac Asimov, the prolific author of some 360 books, to write a screenplay, it certainly isn't for lack of trying. Asimov has had a number of near misses with Hollywood over the years, beginning with FANTASTIC VOYAGE—one of his most popular novels—which was almost never written.

"They sent me the screenplay and asked if I would novelize it, and I said I didn't think so because I wasn't interested in doing throwaways... Get someone else," Asimov remembered, "And they said, no deal, if you don't do it, it won't be done."

Asimov agreed to do it on one condition, that the book be issued in hardcover first, which it was in 1966, the year of the film's release. "As it happened it turned out to be the throwaway that didn't get thrown away. It's still in print, still selling, twenty-one years after the movie vanished."

Last year Asimov wrote FANTASTIC VOYAGE II when a group called Bottom Line Productions bought the rights to do a sequel. They asked him to do a novel based on completely different characters caught in the same situation inside a human body. "I said, no. I've novelized the movie once, I'm not going to do it again. If you want me to write FANTASTIC VOYAGE II I want to make it up entirely myself," which is precisely what Asimov did. "Now the question is whether they will continue making a movie. That depends on whether they can raise the money."

Asimov's renown as an SF novelist sometimes brought more established filmmakers to his door, looking for help. One such was Woody Allen, who had a script for a movie called SLEEPER. "He had the screenplay and all he wanted me to do was tell him if it was good because he had never done a science fiction movie before. I told him it was extremely good and I wouldn't have him change



Science fiction writer Isaac Asimov.

a word," said Asimov. "But then he asked me if I would serve as his consultant. In order to serve as his consultant I would have to go to Hollywood and I don't travel. So that's why I turned it down."

SLEEPER wasn't the only one that got away. "An even more important turndown was once when I met someone I didn't know, who later on I realized was Steven Spielberg. He said that he was starting to do a movie on UFOs and would I want to get involved." Later Asimov learned that the movie he had passed on was CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND.

"Not that I'm sorry," he added with a laugh.

Over the years a number of Asimov's classic novels and stories have been announced as film projects of one sort or another, but have never seemed to make it to the screen. Last year readers of *Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* got to see the screenplay for one of those unmade films, Harlan Ellison's adaptation of *I, ROBOT*.

The script was full of "Harlanesque touches" according to Asimov. "If they had made the picture it would be far more Harlan Ellison than Isaac Asimov, but it would have been a good picture. The only trouble

is that it would have been a very expensive picture."

Asimov's *Foundation* novels and his robot mysteries have also been optioned, although those options eventually ran out with no movie to show for them. Like *I, ROBOT*, *CAVES OF STEEL* reached the screenplay stage although, without Harlan Ellison, the comparison ends there. Noted Asimov, "There was nothing in the screenplay that resembled—in any way—my story, except the title and the names of a couple of the characters."

A film version of Asimov's short story "Nightfall" went into production in 1987, but Asimov claimed to have no knowledge of it. "Someone sent me a clipping about it," he said late last year,

"When I went into Doubleday I handed it to them and said, 'Find out about this. Is there an option on it or what?' They'll eventually tell me. I don't keep track of these things," he explained. "The less I have to do with Hollywood the better."

Asimov downplays his contribution to *LIGHT YEARS*, a script done for Miramax Films, based in New York. "I wasn't really able to do whatever I wanted," he said. "I was constrained by the animation."

One Hollywood project he is actively involved with is a show on ABC called *PROBE*. Asimov described it as the adventures of "an eccentric scientific detective with a young woman as his Watson. [It has] lots of action with some scientific touches and humor." Asimov's involvement with the show, developed as *ASIMOV'S PROBE*, consisted of helping to write the show's "bible" containing the characters and central concepts as well as going over the scripts to "plug up anything that worries me scientifically."

Asimov, whose *Prelude to Foundation* was published this spring, said he has no interest in writing for the big screen again, now that he's finished *LIGHT YEARS*. Asked if he's eager to do another film, he replied, "Not really. It's not my shtick." □

## Surrealistic, adult SF in the vein of French *Metal Hurlant*

LIGHT YEARS

A Miramax Film release of a Rene Laloux presentation. 1/88, 83 mins. In color. Director, Rene Laloux. Director of American version, Harvey Weinstein. Producer, Bob Weinstein. Executive producer, original version, Leon Zuratas. Animation designer, Philippe Caza. Editor, Christine Pansu. Music, Gabriel Yared, Bob Jewett, and Jack Maebly. Screenplay, American version, by Isaac Asimov. Original screenplay by Raphael Cluzel, based on "Metal Men Against Gandahar" by Jean-Pierre Androuan.

With the voices of Glenn Clove, Jennifer Grey, Christopher Plummer, John Shea, Penn Jillette, David Johansen, and Terrence Mann.

by Daniel M. Kimmel

*LIGHT YEARS* turns out neither to be as terrible as the mainstream press would have you believe nor as wonderful as the American producers had promised. Neither group seemed to really understand what was going on here.

Most reviewers accepted Isaac Asimov's screen credit at face value, with some implying that it was nice of the great science fiction writer to allow this Frenchman to animate his work. In fact, as Asimov freely admits, his job was basically to make an English-language translation of an existing French science-fantasy film script so that it would sound natural to American audiences.

Miramax, the American distributor of the film, certainly attracted attention by signing Asimov, and showed that they were aware of the narrative problems within the film. The story centers around life on the planet Gandahar. There the natives live an Eden-like existence, ruled by Queen Ambisextra and her council, who live in the head of Jasper, the female-shaped capital city.

When mysterious robotic invaders begin turning the inhabitants of outlying villages to stone, the Queen sends Sylvain, the film's young hero, to find out what is happening. Sylvain meets up with the Deformed, mutants who turn out to be the result of failed genetic experiments, a secret from Jasper's past. With Airelle, a villager whose people have been lost to the invaders, Sylvain discovers the secret of the power behind the *Metal Men*, leading to a cataclysmic final confrontation with Metamorphosis, a gigantic disembo-

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## Asimov and director Rene Laloux on adapting LIGHT YEARS for America

By Daniel M. Kimmel

In what must be considered something of a coup, Miramax Films convinced veteran science fiction writer Isaac Asimov to write the American screenplay for Rene Laloux' GANDAHAR. Redubbed LIGHT YEARS, the film opened January 29 on a city by city release pattern that should take it well into June. "The original French dialogue had been translated more or less literally into a rather stilted English," explained Asimov. "They asked me to go through it and retranslate it into a more natural version of the English language."

Like his earlier brush with the movies in writing the novelization to FANTASTIC VOYAGE (see opposite) Asimov found his work under certain restrictions. "I couldn't make it very different because I was constrained by the animation," he said. "I wasn't really able to do whatever I wanted."

Asked if he had a problem in writing a script in which an army of robots comes to kill and pillage the peaceful society of Gandahar—in clear violation of Asimov's Three Laws of Robotics—he laughed, "I just detached myself from it. I realized that this is not my original story. Therefore I couldn't really expect it to adhere to the Laws of Robotics."

French director Rene Laloux began developing the film in 1974 after the release of his FANTASTIC PLANET. Laloux acquired the right to the French science fiction novel by Jean-Pierre Andrevon and turned to graphic artist Philippe Caza to help design the picture. Speaking through an interpreter, Laloux explained the way he works. After doing the script, he said, "I start collaborating with a designer. Once we've come up with the major characters, we go back and change that first adaptation. It's kind of a progression." Laloux downplayed the difference between directing animation and live action. "What does a director do with actors?" he said. "I do the same thing with the designers



Rene Laloux

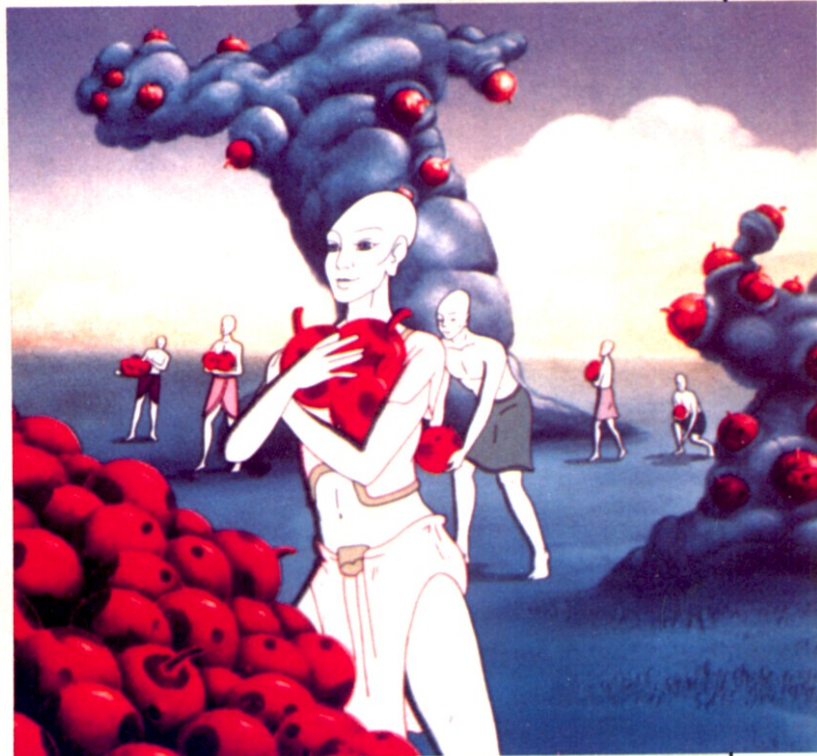
and the artists who do the drawings."

Typically Laloux let Caza come up with the look of the characters and then would discuss modifications and changes. "I never give demonstrations," he said. "I never give rough drawings. I tell them very specifically who the characters are and what I want them to look like. The role of the director is to tap the talent of those around you. You have a vision. You try to get everyone to work within that vision."

Laloux seemed especially pleased that Asimov had been brought onto the project, calling him "one of the greatest science fiction authors of the world." Laloux was also happy that Miramax brought him over from France to see and approve the American script and the redubbing of the film. He did not have such a happy experience with FANTASTIC PLANET, which reportedly was truncated by New World without his input.

The American version uses name actors for the voice characterizations and a different musical score. Bob Jewett and Jack Maeby worked on the music in collaboration with Gabriel Yared, composer of the original score. One bit of music that had to be changed was the music associated with the Deformed which in the original, according to Miramax president Harvey Weinstein, sounded too comic. Now it uses what he describes as "Third World"

To uncover the secret of the Metal Men, Sylvain meets with the Deformed, a tribe of genetic mutations, the result of scientific experimentation on Gandahar.



The harvest on Gandahar, an Eden-like planet whose peace is shattered with the invasion of robotic Metal Men, conquerors who come from the planet's future.

rhythms, which adds to their being considered outsiders in Gandahar's world.

Weinstein originally saw Laloux' FANTASTIC PLANET when he was a college student in 1973, and was impressed with its mature approach to science fiction. "Here was someone doing it the way I used to read it in Heinlein, Bradbury, and Asimov," he said. Weinstein jumped at the chance to buy the American rights to Laloux' new film when he saw it screened last year at Cannes.

Weinstein emphasized that the changes in script and music

were all in collaboration with or with the approval of the originators of the French version, giving American audiences an opportunity to see Laloux's work for the first time in a manner that he approves of, with the full array of surreal detail that made FANTASTIC PLANET so memorable. Laloux heard Glenn Close's performance as Ambisextra, the leader of Gandahar, and, according to Weinstein, "fell in love . . . He likes American voices better than French voices."

Weinstein said that Miramax is looking at Laloux's 1982 film TIME MASTERS with a view towards acquiring it for American distribution. Laloux described the film, which played in France, Germany and Japan but not the U.S., as a "temporal paradox." Said Laloux, "I love the story, but it has certain weaknesses in the drawings."

In the meantime, Laloux is returning to work on other film and television projects, as well as a book about animation. He wouldn't say specifically what he may turn to next but did note, "I'm attracted to projects where the heroes are monsters—in the extraordinary sense, not in the sense of something frightening or awful. Mickey Mouse is, in his own way, a monster." □

## Wes Craven's intense shocker borders on directorial sadism

### THE SERPENT AND THE RAINBOW

A Universal Pictures release, produced by David Ladd and Doug Claybourne. 1/88, 98 mins. In color & Dolby. Director, Wes Craven. Executive producers, Rob Cohen and Keith Barish. Director of photography, John Lindley. Editor, Glenn Farr. Production designer, David Nichols. Art director, David Brishin. Special visual effects supervisor, Gary Gutierrez. Special mechanical effects, Image Engineering. Special makeup effects supervisor, Lance Anderson and David Anderson. Set designer, Dawn Snyder. Costume designer, Peter Mitchell. Music, Brad Fiedel. Sound, Donald Summer. Assistant director, Bob Engelman. Screenplay by Richard Maxwell and A.R. Simoun, based on the book by Wade Davis.

Dennis Alan	Bill Pullman
Marielle	Cathy Tyson
Dargent Peytraud	Zakes Mokae
Lucien Céline	Paul Winfield
Mozart	Brent Jennings
Christophe	Conrad Roberts
Gaston	Badja Djola
Simone	Theresa Merritt
Schoonbacher	Michael Gough
Andrew Cassidy	Paul Guilfoyle
Mrs. Cassidy	Dey Young
Celestine	Aleta Mitchell

by Bob Morrish

Director Wes Craven's films have always been distinguished by their striking visual imagery and *THE SERPENT AND THE RAINBOW* is no exception. From the film's opening moments, Craven begins to blur the line between hallucination and the perceived real world, weaving lush Haitian landscapes, shadowy darkness and dazzling special effects into a tapestry of alternate realities. The film's incredible imagery is unfortunately hampered by a script which all-too-often breaks the mood with exceptionally banal dialogue, including



Wes Craven directs Cathy Tyson and Bill Pullman on location in Haiti.

some annoying narrative voice-overs from the protagonist. Craven has stated that the script was almost entirely rewritten once the crew arrived on location in Haiti; this may be the case, but numerous weak spots remain.

Bill Pullman (*Lone Star* in *SPACEBALLS*) stars as the scientist who's dispatched to Haiti by an American drug company, to acquire a sample of a mysterious powder that's used for "zombification." But Pullman runs afoul of Dargent Peytraud, the malicious head of the feared Tontons Macoute security force, and a dabbler in voodoo. Zakes Mokae

plays Peytraud with deadly glee, baring his teeth in a fearsome grimace at the slightest provocation. Peytraud's subsequent torture of Pullman is so excruciatingly depicted that it almost seems that the character's malice has infected director Craven. It's interesting to note that Pullman is led to plead, beg and scream for his life, a kind of weakness not usually displayed by celluloid heroes. For the majority of the picture, in fact, Pullman's scientist is portrayed as weak and ineffective, subject to the whim of greater forces.

Some of the film's most startling moments come at the least expected

times, case in point being the sudden possession of a pharmaceutical executive's wife (Dey Young) at a dinner party celebrating Pullman's apparent triumphant return. The prim and proper hostess abruptly takes knife in hand and strikes out at the scientist, whose nightmares have become indistinguishable from his waking ordeals.

Craven takes a decidedly nasty tack in depicting Pullman's premature burial, employing a first-person camera angle to illustrate Pullman's mounting panic as he is declared dead, placed in a coffin and buried. The final seconds of this sequence, as the audience hears dirt hitting the coffin lid while viewing a screen filled with total blackness, are particularly claustrophobic. One gets the feeling that Craven doesn't just want this film to startle its audience in their seats, he wants it to live on in their nightmares for nights to come. Though Craven's shock scenes are terrifyingly rendered, for some viewers they may cross the line from merely eliciting audience empathy to a kind of directorial sadism.

The climactic finale sees Pullman pay back Peytraud in kind while Haiti's Duvalier dictatorship falls in the background, a deft blending by Craven of the supernatural with the political horrors of the real world. □

## A repellent splatter film for gorehounds only

### BRAIN DAMAGE

A Palisades Entertainment release of a Henenlotter/Levins production. 4/88, 94 mins. In color. Director, Frank Henenlotter. Producer, Edgar Levins. Executive producers, Andre Blay & Al Eicher. Director of photography, Bruce Torbet. Editor, James Y. Kwei & Henenlotter. Art director, Ivy Rosovsky. Special effects supervisor, Al Magliochetti. Set designer, Charles Bennett. Music, Gus Russo & Clutch Reiser. Assistant director, Gregory Lamberson. Screenplay by Frank Henenlotter.

Brian	Rick Herbst
Mike	Gordon MacDonald
Barbara	Jennifer Lowry
Morris	Theo Barnes
Martha	Lucille Saint-Peter
Blond in Hell club	Vicki Darnell
Man with basket	Kevin Van Hentenryck

by Todd French

*BRAIN DAMAGE* is the first film in six years by Frank Henenlotter, whose '81 debut splatter feature, *BASKET CASE* (12:5:91) became an unqualified hit on the midnight cult circuit. Like that movie, Henenlotter's newest flick occasionally overcomes the limitations of its penny-dreadful sce-

nario with an inventiveness and 45-watt sleaze-badge-of-honor sensibility that's uniquely its own. There hasn't been a genre offering to rival its queasy mix of ultra-violent slapstick and unbelievable, jaw-dropping grue since Stuart Gordon's 1985 horror-sleeper, *THE RE-ANIMATOR*.

Jettisoning the conventions of characterization (ala Romero's *DAWN OF THE DEAD*), Henenlotter quickly drops his audience into the middle of his *A Boy and His Parasite Get High* narrative, which owes a debt to one of Robert Block's nastier short stories, "Enoch."

Like *BASKET CASE*, *BRAIN DAMAGE* is a blood-soaked yarn about a street-wise monster leading a young man into a depraved lifestyle of murder. And to be sure, Elmer, the film's brain-hungry,

all-singing, all-dancing parasite is more than a match for *BASKET CASE*'s horrific Siamese twin, Belial. Elmer, with his toothy grin and goofy Tex Avery cartoon peepers, is an effective creation by Gabe Bartalos and Dave Kindlon, typifying the infectuous low-down appeal of Henenlotter's movie. Elmer also accomplishes what none of Henenlotter's other characters ever do: he exhibits a consistent personality.

Though *BRAIN DAMAGE* is often derailed by the same predictable splatter formula which sabotaged *BASKET CASE*'s moments of poverty-row vitality, it picks up considerable steam whenever it settles down to focus on the hallucinatory binges Elmer induces in his young host, Brian (Rick Herbst). Nevertheless, what will

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Elmer, the star of *BRAIN DAMAGE*, the most winning film monster since *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS*' Audrey II.



## Filming makeup effects for SERPENT AND THE RAINBOW

By Steve Biodrowski

When hired to supply mechanical makeup effects for *THE SERPENT AND THE RAINBOW*, Lance Anderson was given only one month to prepare before the film would start production in Haiti. Since this was about half the time necessary, Anderson sent his son David to Haiti at the start of production, along with those props and makeups ready to be filmed. Lance remained in California with the rest of the crew—Jim McPhearson, Jim Kagel, Jeff Farley, and Leonard MacDonald—to prepare the remainder of the effects.

Explaining the decision to remain behind, Lance said, "When I first heard it was gonna be in Haiti, I thought, 'This is the Carribean—maybe it'd be a nice vacation.' So I started checking up, and I discovered it wasn't quite the resort I had hoped." Added Anderson with a laugh, "So why not send my son?"

David Anderson, the sole member of the makeup effects crew to suffer the hardships of filming for two and a half weeks in Haiti, also had to laugh. "He said, 'to Haiti,' I thought he said, 'Tahiti,'" said David. "Actually, it turned out that most of what I did the first month was just plain makeup. We found we didn't have time on the set to do the special effects shots. Most

Impressed with Anderson's false head of actor Paul Winfield, Craven devised the scene where Winfield rips it off.



Lance Anderson

everything was pushed back to shoot in a warehouse in the Dominican Republic after we got out of Haiti."

Because of constant rewriting, several of the effects were never filmed, and new ones were added, including a new ending. Among the discards were a

neck appliance for a cougar-slashing and a graphic decapitation of Mozart (Brent Jennings). "I'm glad they kept some of the gory things out," said David. "I think it works better, saving the shock value for the end." Many of the new effects were inspired by props which director Wes Craven liked and wanted to use more extensively.

Said David, "Craven knew what he wanted, didn't know if it was possible, and was leaving it up to me. I'd make an occasional frantic phone call back here: 'Wes has this crazy idea—what the hell am I gonna do?' For instance, the scene where Paul Winfield pulls his own head off. The scene we built that head for was an insert shot of centipedes coming out of his mouth. It was just a sculpture. Wes said, 'I love the head—I want to use it in another scene.' I had my makeup case; I didn't have a lab, though. So the assistance that I got came from [special effects coordinator] Peter Chesny. Whenever he had an extra moment, I'd tug on his sleeve and say 'Help me!' A lot of assistance also came from [key makeup artist] Michelle Buhler. With her help I was able to leave the set to go work on things that Wes was creating."

The effect was achieved by having Paul Winfield pull his head as far back as possible so that the sculpted head could be mounted on his shoulders, which were then built up with foam construction. When filmed from a low angle, the head appeared to be in the correct position while Winfield's real hands ripped it from the shoulders.

Unfortunately, some of the improvised makeup effects also failed to make it into the finished film. For instance, Craven so liked the "Old Crone" dummy (built for the scene in which the



Zakes Mokae as the burned corpse of Dargent Peytraud, a gelatin makeup by Lance Anderson for the punchier ending Wes Craven devised in postproduction.

snake jumps out of her mouth) that he wanted to reuse it in a brief hallucinatory scene where it emerges from a grave. The effect was achieved by having David in the grave, pushing it to the surface, but the shot was dropped in editing (though it appears commonly as a publicity photograph, see 18:2/3:121).

Also, during the next to last day of filming pick-up shots, Craven asked for slashes to appear on the villain's face for the film's original conclusion. "Wes said, 'We'll try it first thing tomorrow. If you can get it, fine; if not, we understand.'" David Anderson said he painted cuts on actor Zakes Mokae's face, then covered them with material which was yanked back by a monofilament to reveal the cuts. "It was very crude," said Anderson, "but it was all we could do. It worked beautifully, but you can't really tell because it was so dark. If you're looking for it, you can see."

While David Anderson has his share of hair-raising stories about filming in Haiti, his father has a few of his own about the work back in Hollywood: "I had to take a lifecast of a deadly snake," said Lance Anderson. "[Snake and insect handler] Jim Picciolo furnished a gaboon viper. Joking, he called it a 'Two-step Snake'—if it bites you, you take two steps and die!"

The snake had been drugged two days prior to the casting. Picciolo held it down while

Anderson applied the alginate. The cast went back about a foot down the neck; since snakes can hold their breath for a long time, no holes were left for breathing. The snake was fine as long as the alginate was wet like mud, but "when it started to set, he couldn't move his head—and he started to jump around. A cold sweat broke out on me."

From the cast, Anderson built a snake mask which slips on

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Anderson's Old Crone puppet and the appliance (inset) used for the real snake that lunges at Bill Pullman.



## Shooting MIND KILLER in Denver for the direct-to-video market

By Steven J. Lehti

"We're not shooting NAZI BIMBO SLUTS FROM HELL," said First Films Inc. President Michael Krueger of his company's product. "We're producing projects with some integrity—ones our actors and crew can be proud to be associated with."

Krueger was talking about MIND KILLER and NIGHT VISION, two genre films already completed (though the company started in business only little more than a year ago), and a third, LONE WOLF, currently in the editing process. The projects were produced through Denver-based First Films' wholly-owned subsidiary, Flash Features, which caters strictly to the ancillary markets of home video, pay-cable and syndicated television. Four or five other direct-to-video companies operating domestically have thus far produced mostly less-than-noteworthy gore and slasher films. Krueger agreed, but took pains to portray his company as standing above the rest. MIND KILLER, released to video stores in January, bears out Krueger's claim to quality.

Shirley Ross and the first-stage brain creature, recalling the look of the '50s monster in FIEND WITHOUT A FACE.



Michael Krueger

Initially, Krueger's intention was to produce theatrical films. In late summer 1986, Krueger worked with a Denver penny-stock brokerage firm and went public. It was Krueger's dealings with Malone and Associates that led the Chicago native to locate in Denver to begin

with. Their subsequent initial public offering closed in a record 21 days, raising \$1 million for the company to develop its product. Krueger and his associates raised financing for the company rather than for a particular film. That way, "we basically have enough funds to make the company go for the next two to three years," he said. "And we're finding third-party financing for the actual feature films themselves."

As First Films geared up for theatrical film production, the company also began to explore the opportunities offered by the home-video market. Going this direction saved the fledgling enterprise expensive print and advertising costs. Comparing the riskiness of small-feature theatrical release with the growing demand for home video product, the most profitable course was only too clear. "If you can produce a good quality product inexpensively," Krueger noted, "the ancillary markets are looking for you."

Within a month First Films signed a three-picture deal with one of the country's most aggressive independent video distributors, Prism Entertainment. A second company arm, Flash Features, was created in November 1986 to develop these non-theatrical projects. Under this agreement, Prism covers all costs for production, prints and distribution. Its subsidiary, Fox-Lorber, handles foreign rights and television sales. First Films is paid a percentage of sales once costs have been recovered, which means there's no risk to the company whatsoever. Already initial sales of MIND KILLER to Japan, Australia and the United Kingdom have recouped the company's negative costs.

The agreement with Prism required First Films to keep



Warren's brain develops a mind and a body of its own, one of the video feature's elaborate special effects created by Ted Bohus and Vincent Guastini.

those costs down. Krueger said the budgets have been under \$1 million, "and in many cases, substantially under that." In addition to having non-union shoots, the company has hired local talent, paying much less than they would in Hollywood. Krueger said he hoped to follow the successful trail blazed by Roger Corman, giving new talent the opportunity to work hard and move up through the ranks, as did many of Corman's proteges. "Our actors have the opportunity to star in a feature film, which would be nearly impossible for an unknown on the West Coast."

Krueger has worked exten-

sively in commercials and industrial films, and sports and entertainment programming. In addition to overseeing the business aspects of the company, he also plays a creative hand. He co-wrote the script for MIND KILLER (with Dave Sipos and Curtis Hannum, two Denver-based comedians) and originally penned LONE WOLF three and a half years ago. He's also directed the first two films.

Special effects for MIND KILLER were created by an effects team flown in from the East Coast (the appliances themselves were actually created

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Tom Henry as Warren, suffering the results of his mind expanding machine.



## Direct-to-video low-budget horror effort is a surprise hit

### MIND KILLER

A Prism Entertainment and Flash Features presentation. 1/88. 86 mins. In color. Director, Michael Krueger. Producer, Sarah H. Liles. Executive producer, A. B. Goldberg. Director of photography, Jim Kelley. Editor, Jonathan Moser. Special effects supervisor, Ted A. Bohus. Special makeup effects, Vincent J. Guastini. Music, Jeffrey Wood. Sound, Bob Abbott. Assistant director, Sarah H. Liles. Screenplay by Michael Krueger, Dave Sipos, & Curtis Hannum.

Warren ..... Joe McDonald  
 Larry ..... Christopher Wade  
 Sandy ..... Shirley Ross  
 Brad ..... Kevin Hart  
 Vivac Chandra ..... Tom Henry  
 Mrs. Chandra ..... Diana Calhoun  
 Townsend ..... George Flynn

by Steven J. Lehti

First Films president Michael Krueger claims that their start-up project, *MIND KILLER*, will be marketed as "the first intellectual horror film." Likely a jest on the film's "brain creature" subject matter, but it's safe to predict that this direct-to-video feature won't be mentioned in the same breath as *THE WICKER MAN* or *THE INNOCENTS*. Yet, for all its commercial trappings, *MIND KILLER* has elements of intelligence frequently absent from larger-budget theatrical releases and, especially, direct-to-video projects in particular.

The film's central concept of a nebbish gaining supernatural powers is hardly novel. One can look to John Carpenter's lackluster *CHRISTINE* to find a recent antecedent. But *MINDKILLER*'s greatest strength lies in its humorous approach. Though photography and direction lack imagination and verve, the script is fairly tight and cohesive, keeping things moving at a fast clip. Not all of the script's intended humor amuses (particularly some slapstick and so-called social commentary on the singles' scene), but there are enough modest comic moments to sustain interest.

*MIND KILLER* tells the story of Warren (Joe McDonald), a nerdy, socially maladjusted library archivist who happens upon a manuscript written by an experimenter who died due to his dabblings in mind control. One reading of the manuscript, and suddenly Warren finds himself gaining the powers of clairvoyance, telekinesis (always handy for working a woman's zipper), and telepathy. But the one woman Warren really wants—his co-worker Sandy (Shirley Ross)—has a head on her shoulders, and proves difficult to control. Warren's brain gradually

develops a mind, as well as a body of its own. Taking leave of Warren, it spends the conclusion of the film terrorizing the rest of the cast.

*MIND KILLER* is an ambitious little film, with moments of cleverness. Its modest good humor is a fairly consistent presence until the last quarter, when director Krueger unleashes the special effects crew. Then, the comedy is summarily jettisoned in favor of a prolonged, and belated, attempt at shocks and goo. Other than its script, *MIND KILLER*'s strength comes from Joe McDonald's thoughtful performance, and the actor is sorely missed once he's replaced by the pyrotechnics.

The brain monster is well-done, but we are more moved to admire the technical skill behind it rather than find it frightening. The continuity of Warren's transformation is hurt by the fact that in his last appearance, the swollen-head prosthetic mask is worn by another actor who doesn't suggest McDonald at all. And due to budgetary limitations, the very same mask is worn by the mind-control manuscript's author in the film's awkward prologue.

Claustrophobia for the viewer results from a lack of exteriors and Jeffrey Wood provides a dull score. When you finish watching *MIND KILLER* in the comfort of your own home, you'll likely suffer the urge to leave it in order to get some air. The video transfer for editing purposes gives the 16mm film the soft look of a McDonald's commercial or an episode of *TALES FROM THE DARKSIDE*. These factors, plus sedentary photography and some sloppy editing give *MINDKILLER* the appearance of a cheap TV show rather than a low-budget feature film.

Most direct-to-video films have featured either pornography or explicit gore. Rather than churn out another forgettable, mindless slasher picture, Krueger and company chose to aim a little higher. Behind this very commercial effort lurk grains of intelligence, creativity and wit. Given the quality of its precursors, and its miniscule budget, *MIND KILLER* remains a noteworthy achievement—one which bodes well for the future of First Films. □



Traci Lords nurses alien Arthur Roberts in the new *NOT OF THIS EARTH*.

## Traci Lords gets respectable in Corman remake that isn't

### NOT OF THIS EARTH

A Concorde release of a Roger Corman presentation. 5/88. In color. Director, Jim Wynorski. Producers, Jim Wynorski & Murray Miller. Director of photography, Zoran Hochstatter. Editorial assistant, Robin Toor. Production designers, Jim Stewart & Linda Ohall. Art director, Hayden Yates. Special effects, Motion Opticals, Inc. Set designer, Gregory Blair. Costume Designer, Libby Jacobs. Sound, David John West. Assistant director, Murray Miller. Stunt Coordinator, Patrick Statham. Screenplay by R.J. Charles & Jim Wynorski, based on a story by Robert B. Griffith & Mark Hanna.

Nadine Story ..... Traci Lords  
 Alien ..... Arthur Roberts  
 Dr. Rochelle ..... Ace Mask  
 Harry ..... Roger Lodge

by Patrick Hobby

Boy, are the Traci Lords fans ever gonna be disappointed with this one! This is her second foray into the realm of *cinfantastique*, and it just doesn't live up to the promise of her earlier venture. Before, she played a mermaid in this film that was just like *SPLASH*, except that Lords' mermaid jumped into bed with John Leslie, and they didn't cut away.

In this film, Lords hardly ever takes her clothes off, and even when she does it's like a joke—there's one scene where she's in bed with this guy and it's obvious they're not really doing anything. It's like the director's telling us we should have stayed home and tried to rent one of her old video cassettes.

The plot of this movie is exactly like the plot of the old '50s version. If you've seen that one, there's no reason to see this. The one good thing in this movie is Arthur Roberts, the guy who plays the alien; he doesn't really act like an alien; he acts more like a guy in a

'50s movie, which, in the '80s, makes him seem kind of like an alien. It's kind of cool when you think about it.

The film was directed by Jim Wynorski, who used to write articles for *Fangoria*. But fans of his writing are likely to be disappointed, too. Like Lords, he's grown positively respectable.

I don't know what I was expecting—maybe something out of Corman's *HUMANOIDS FROM THE DEEP*, which they show a bunch of clips from during the opening credits, along with clips

continued on page 55

Alien Woman Rebecca Perle.



# FILM RATINGS

## BAD DREAMS

Directed by Andrew Fleming. 20th Century Fox, 4/88, 84 mins. With: Jennifer Rubin, Bruce Abbott, Richard Lynch, Dean Cameron.

A disappointing project from the usually reliable Gale Anne Hurd whose previous production efforts have included the high-energy, visually stunning *ALIENS* and *THE TERMINATOR*, both with husband/director James Cameron. Unfortunately, first-time director Andrew Fleming isn't in Cameron's league here.

Comparisons with Wes Craven's trend-setting *NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET* series are inevitable, including frequent dream sequences, a passive Freddy Krueger imitation (Richard Lynch in burn makeup by Michele Burke), and a group therapy setting directly swiped from *NIGHTMARE 3*. The climactic plot twist, revealing Bruce Abbott as the killer is totally unbelievable. It's all been done before and better. ● Gary Kimber

Though critics skewered this for its *NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET* trappings, it's actually a rip-off of something else. Back in 1980, John Huston directed a little-seen horror film called *PHOBIA*, starring Paul Michael Glaser as a psychiatrist whose phobic patients were killed off one by one by their own doctor. It took four writers (Andrew Fleming, Michael Dick, P.J. Pettiette and Yuri Zeltser) to come up with the identical plot.

● Judith P. Harris

Kane Hodder as Jason in *FRIDAY THE 13TH—PART VII*, Paramount's annual slashfest.



Michael Keaton in *BETLEJUICE*, a supernatural circus.

## BETLEJUICE

Directed by Tim Burton. Warner Bros., 3/88, 92 mins. With: Alec Baldwin, Geena Davis, Michael Keaton, Catherine O'Hara.

You know who people call when they want to get rid of ghosts, but who do ghosts call when they want to get rid of people? *Betelgeuse!* While this take-off may lack some of *GHOSTBUSTER*'s grandeur, it also lacks that film's obsession with overwhelming spectacle. Special effects blend as one with the comedy here, with a lot of creative and funny ideas, visualized in inventive production design and played out by engaging characters. Director Tim Burton's clever use of Harry Belafonte's calypso music could result in a revival. The ending's a bit abrupt, but basically caps a well-paced crazy, clever tale, which even has a bit of heart. *Betelgeuse* is well worth calling on.

●● Allen Malmquist

## CRITTERS 2

Directed by Mick Garris. New Line Cinema, 4/88, 85 mins. With: Scott Grimes, Liane Curtis, Don Opper, Barry Corbin.

Subtitled as *THE MAIN COURSE* on the posters but not on the print itself, this is a sequel that didn't need to be made. It adds nothing to the original *CRITTERS*, except for a sequence in which the toothy aliens band together into a giant ball. Big fat hairy deal.

The budget for Broadway star Terrence Mann must have run out early in the production, as his role is filled out most of the time by a faceless stuntman. Played much more for comedy than the original *CRITTERS* (which, nevertheless, had quite a bit of humor in it), director Mick Garris shows the Chiodo Brothers' creations a little too much, revealing their puppet origins.

● Judith P. Harris

## DEAD HEAT

Directed by Mark Goldblatt. New World, 5/88, 86 mins. With: Treat Williams, Joe Piscopo, Lindsay Frost, Darren McGavin.

A clever idea and some good set pieces held together by a weak plot and bad dialogue. Film is at its best and funniest when played straight but the humor tends to outweigh the horror. Fortunately, some good makeups and performances help to compensate.

●● Steve Biodrowski

An eager cast scrambles on a treadmill to salvage this dim clone of countless zombie cheapies. The film never gains its footing under amateurish direction. Under the circumstances the makeup effects are negligible.

● Bill Kelley

## FAITH HEALER

Directed by David Cronenberg. Paramount Television (episode of *FRIDAY THE 13TH—THE SERIES*), 12/87, 45 mins. With: Robert Silverman, Robey, Christopher Wiggins, John D. Le May.

David Cronenberg—bored between projects and itchy to direct—rewrote Christine Cornish's teleplay for a *FRIDAY THE 13TH* episode and directed it last fall. It's the series' only decent installment to date. Cronenberg stock player Robert Silverman spends his life debunking faith healers, until he needs one himself. Clinically grisly by TV (but not Cronenberg) standards, the episode shoves the series' stars into the background and concentrates on the effects of a glove that heals—then passes on disease. Cronenberg's direction is taut and confident.

●● Bill Kelley

## THE FOX AND THE HOUND

Directed by Art Stevens, Ted Berman, Richard Rich. Buena Vista, 3/88 (re-issue), 83 mins. Voices: Mickey Rooney, Kurt Russell, Pearl Bailey, Jack Albertson.

Disney's long-awaited re-issue of their 1981 animated

parable about the young friendship between two natural enemies hasn't a song I can remember, but its final image of the grown-up fox watching his life-long friend slowly trudge back to the world of men still touches a delicate nerve whenever I think of it. Just a clue to the special Disney magic in store for those who were too young or old to see it the first time around.

●● Les Paul Robley

## FRIDAY THE 13TH: PART VII—THE NEW BLOOD

Directed by John Beuchler. Paramount, 5/88, 92 mins. With: Lar Park Lincoln.

The screenwriters have taken a cue from Stephen King and introduced an emotionally disturbed psychokinetic young woman (Lar Park Lincoln) who unwittingly reanimates Jason while attempting to give life to her father whom she saw drown in Crystal Lake as a child. Be assured, this premise plays as ludicrously as it reads.

Effects artist-turned-director John Beuchler has toned down the gore, but the "sex is punishable by death" message is as blatant as ever. In a reasonably rousing finale, the hockey-masked maniac faces off against the *Carrie*-inspired heroine. ● Vincent J. Bossone

## THE HIGHWAYMAN

Directed by Dan Haller. NBC/Universal TV, 3/88, 60 mins. With Sam Jones, Jacko.

While your eyes are watching this Glen A. Larson produced series, your unoccupied brain can keep busy compiling a list of the earlier, better films it ransacks for ideas: *ROAD WARRIOR*, *CROCODILE DUNDEE*, and, in the pilot, *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS*. Sneaky Oriental scientists are raising the dead in this busy, yet boringly derivative vigilante series, set

vaguely in the future. Its lone achievement is to demonstrate how much better Stephen Cannell handles similar material.

● Bill Kelley

## THE INVISIBLE KID

Directed by Avery Crouse. Taurus Entertainment, 4/88, 96 mins. With Jay Underwood, Wally Ward, Karen Black.

A high school nerd (Jay Underwood) tries desperately to discover the missing component in his late father's scientific formula for invisibility. It turns out to be pigeon dung, which pretty much sets the tone for this dimly incept teen comedy.

Once the formula is made, the kid and his best buddy (Wally Ward) use it for all sorts of inventive and worthwhile purposes, such as pulling the pants down on the local basketball star (Nicholas de Toth) and strolling through the girls' shower stall. Karen Black appears as the student's wacky mom, a role that doesn't do much more than jeopardize what meager film career she has left. Special effects by Tassilo Bauer are convincing, given the obvious shoestring budget of the production.

● Dann Gire

## LADY IN WHITE

Directed by Frank LaLoggia. New Century/Vista, 4/88, 112 mins. With: Lukas Haas, Len Cariou, Alex Rocco, Katherine Helmond.

In the most delightfully intriguing ghost story to come along in some time, director Frank LaLoggia integrates humor, pathos and thrills in a neat package. Lukas Haas, the youngster from *WITNESS*, heads an excellent cast as Frankie Scarlatti, a boy whose life is dramatically changed when he is locked in a school coat room on Halloween night and witnesses the ghostly demise of a young girl who was murdered

Sorceress Bavmorda (Jean Marsh) in the soggy climax of *WILLOW*.



# FILM RATINGS

ten years before. Only the girl's spectral image is seen while the killer, who is still alive, remains elusive. A deadly clue is left behind that threatens Frankie's life. Mystery piles on mystery.

Seldom does LaLoggia let his film sag, despite its lengthy running time. Wonderful characters and subplots keep the story interesting, including Frankie's grandparents, who have a humorous running feud about smoking, and the arrest of the town's black janitor for the murder. Flaws emerge, like the time-worn cheap thrill at the climax and some effects that don't quite come off, but there is enough rich texture, atmosphere and characterization to banish the oversights. Don't miss it.

••• Dan Scapperotti

## THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE

Directed by John Frankenheimer. United Artists, 2/88 (re-issue), 126 mins. With: Frank Sinatra, Laurence Harvey, Janet Leigh, Angela Lansbury.

This 1962 classic about Cold War brainwashing has been out of release for many years, reportedly at the behest of Frank Sinatra. Based on the novel by Richard Condon, it tells of a group of Korean veterans who have been so broken down that one of their number (Laurence Harvey) has been programmed as an assassin. Its brainwashing sequence is especially terrifying as we see Harvey kill on command for an audience while through his eyes—we see a meeting of a women's garden club. Angela Lansbury is memorable in an Oscar-nominated performance as Harvey's ruthless mother. Hailed as one of the major psychological and political thrillers of the '60s, its theatrical rerelease prior to its expected appearance on video is long overdue.

•••• Daniel M. Kimmel

## MANIAC COP

Directed by William Lustig. Shapiro Glick-enthus Ent., 5/88, 86 mins. With: Tom Atkins, Bruce Campbell, Laureen London, Richard Roundtree.

Matt Cordell (Robert Z'andar) is a nut case in a cop uniform who indiscriminately slaughters people with the blade concealed in his night stick. Turns out, he's a disgruntled ex-city employee who now wants to kill the mayor. Cordell manages to kill everyone except his intended target. The people behind this junk (Larry Cohen is executive producer) obviously know their way around action and horror movies, but they've never been connected with anything as derivative and mush-minded as this. o **Dann Gire**

FILM TITLE	••••		••••		••		•		o			
	MUST SEE	EXCELLENT	GOOD	MEDIOCRE	POOR	SB	VJB	FSC	DG	JPH	BK	DS
<b>ANGUISH</b> /Bigas Luna Spectra Film, 4/87, 89 mins.			•	••				••	•	•		
<b>BAD DREAMS</b> /Andrew Fleming 20th Century-Fox, 4/88, 84 mins.			••	•	o	•	•	•	•	•	•	••
<b>BATTERIES NOT INCLUDED</b> / Matthew Robbins, Universal, 12/87, 106 mins.			•	••			••	o	••	•		•
<b>BEAUTY &amp; THE BEAST</b> /Tony Thomas CBS-TV, weekly series, 60 mins.			••	••	•			•	•	•	•	••
<b>BEETLEJUICE</b> /Tim Burton Warner Bros, 3/88, 92 mins.			•••	•••	••	••••	••	••	••	••	••	••
<b>CRITTERS 2</b> /Mick Garris New Line Cinema, 4/88, 85 mins.			•		•	••	•	•	•	•	•	•
<b>DEAD HEAT</b> /Mark Goldblatt New World, 5/88, 86 mins.			••		•	o	••	•	•	•	•	•
<b>THE FOX &amp; THE HOUND</b> /Reitherman & Stevens, Buena Vista, 3/88 (re-issue), 83 mins.				••		•••	••	••	••	••	••	••
<b>FRIDAY THE 13TH PART VII</b> / John Beachler, Paramount, 5/88, 92 mins.				•	•	o	•	•	•	•	•	•
<b>FRIDAY THE 13TH: THE SERIES</b> / Frank Mancuso, Jr., syndicated series, 60 mins.			o	•	o		•	•	•	•	•	••
<b>THE INVISIBLE KID</b> /Avery Crouse Taurus Ent., 4/88, 95 mins.				o	o		•	•	•	•	•	•
<b>THE LADY IN WHITE</b> /Frank LaLoggia New Century/Vista, 4/88, 112 mins.			•••		••	•••	••	••	••	••	••	•••
<b>LIGHT YEARS</b> /Rene Laloux Miramax Films, 1/88, 83 mins.				••	••			o				
<b>THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE</b> / Frankenheimer, UA, 2/88 (re-issue), 126 mins.			••••	••	••	••••	••••	••••	••••	••••	••	••
<b>MANIAC COP</b> /William Lustig Shapiro Glickenthus Ent., 5/88, 86 mins.			•			o	•	•	•	•	•	•
<b>MAX HEADROOM</b> /Phil DeGuere ABC-TV, 4/88, 60 mins.			•••	••	•			o	•	•	••	
<b>THE MILAGRO BEANFIELD WAR</b> / Robert Redford, Universal, 3/88, 117 mins.			••		••	••	••	••	••	••	••	••
<b>RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD PART 2</b> / Ken Wiederhorn, Lorimar, 1/88, 89 mins.			•	•	•	o	o	o	•	•	•	••
<b>THE SERPENT &amp; THE RAINBOW</b> / Wes Craven, Universal, 2/88, 98 mins.			••	••	••	•	••	••	••	••	••	••
<b>THE SEVENTH SIGN</b> /Carl Schulz Tri-Star, 4/88, 97 mins.			•••	••	••	o	o	o	•	•	••	•
<b>SOMETHING IS OUT THERE</b> / Richard Colla, NBC-TV, 5/88, 240 mins.								o	••	••	•	•
<b>STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION</b> / Gene Roddenberry, syndicated series, 60 mins.			•	••	••	••	••	••	••	••	••	••
<b>THE UNHOLY</b> /Camilo Vila Vestron Pictures, 4/88, 100 mins.			•	o	•	•	•	•	•	•	••	••
<b>VICE VERSA</b> /Brian Gilbert Columbia, 2/88, 2/88, 99 mins.			••	o		••	••	••	••	••	••	••
<b>WEREWOLF</b> /Stephen J. Cannell Fox TV series, 30 mins.			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
<b>WILLOW</b> /Ron Howard MGM, 5/88, 120 mins					•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

SB/Steve Biodrowski VJB/Vincent J. Bossone FSC/Frederick S. Clarke DG/Dann Gire  
JPH/Judith P. Harris BK/Bill Kelley DS/Dan Scapperotti

## THE MILAGRO BEANFIELD WAR

Directed by Robert Redford. Universal, 3/88, 117 mins. With: Ruben Blades, Richard Bradford, Sonia Braga, Julie Carmen.

Based on John Nichols' whimsical book about how the planting of a beanfield gets an entire New Mexican town into an uproar, director Robert Redford has fashioned an amiable fantasy in which an angel, who only is seen and talks to an old man named Jorge, intervenes in the poor-against-the-rich struggle that the beanfield precipitates. Crisply shot by Robbie Greenberg, the film emphasizes the beauty of New Mexico and has been exquisitely cast. It lacks the richness of the book but is still humorous and charming.

••• Dennis Fischer

## THE SEVENTH SIGN

Directed by Carl Schultz. Tri-Star, 4/88, 97 mins. With Demi Moore, Michael Biehn, Jurgen Prochnow, Manny Jacobs.

A surprising genre triumph that aims high—its contemporary plot embraces biblical references from the Apocalypse to the Second Coming—yet never loses its visceral momentum. Pregnant Demi Moore flees an obsessed priest and a sullen stranger as cataclysmic events disrupt nature in remote parts of the world. Remarkably fast-paced, eye-filling and

unpretentious, this is also the most literate horror film in years.

••• Bill Kelley

## SOMETHING IS OUT THERE

Directed by Richard Colla. NBC-TV, 5/88, 240 mins. With: Joe Cortese, Maryam D'Abo, George Dzundza, Gregory Sierra.

Sure, it's derivative of every alien-in-hiding movie from THE THING to last year's THE HIDDEN. But this lively, pulpy mini-series, with a huge, vicious, lobster-like alien created by Rick Baker, starts at a high energy level and never lets up. It's fun—and unusually gruesome for TV. John Dykstra provided some slick, colorful visual effects which don't

break any new ground but enhance the show's otherworldly atmosphere. Extremely good Niensens may have locked up a weekly series slot on NBC's fall schedule.

••• Bill Kelley

## THE UNHOLY

Directed by Camilo Vila. Vestron Pictures, 4/88, 100 mins. With Ben Cross, Hal Holbrook, Jill Carroll, William Russ.

This is a pseudo-religious bit of bilge about a demon that walks the Earth in human form during Lent. It tempts pure people with their greatest desire and, as the pure person succumbs to the temptation, it kills them and takes them to hell. All this is revealed at the tail end of a very dull film, limply directed by Camilo Vila, interspersed with almost subliminal glimpses of the demon and occasional gore sequences. The demon by Bob Keen isn't bad, but is shown too clearly. The two little minions of evil accompanying it, midgets in suits, are laughable. This work is nowhere near the level of excellence Keen displayed in HELLRAISER.

••• Judith P. Harris

## WILLOW

Directed by Ron Howard. MGM/UA, 5/88, 120 mins. With: Warrick Davis, Val Kilmer, Jean Marsh, Joanne Whalley.

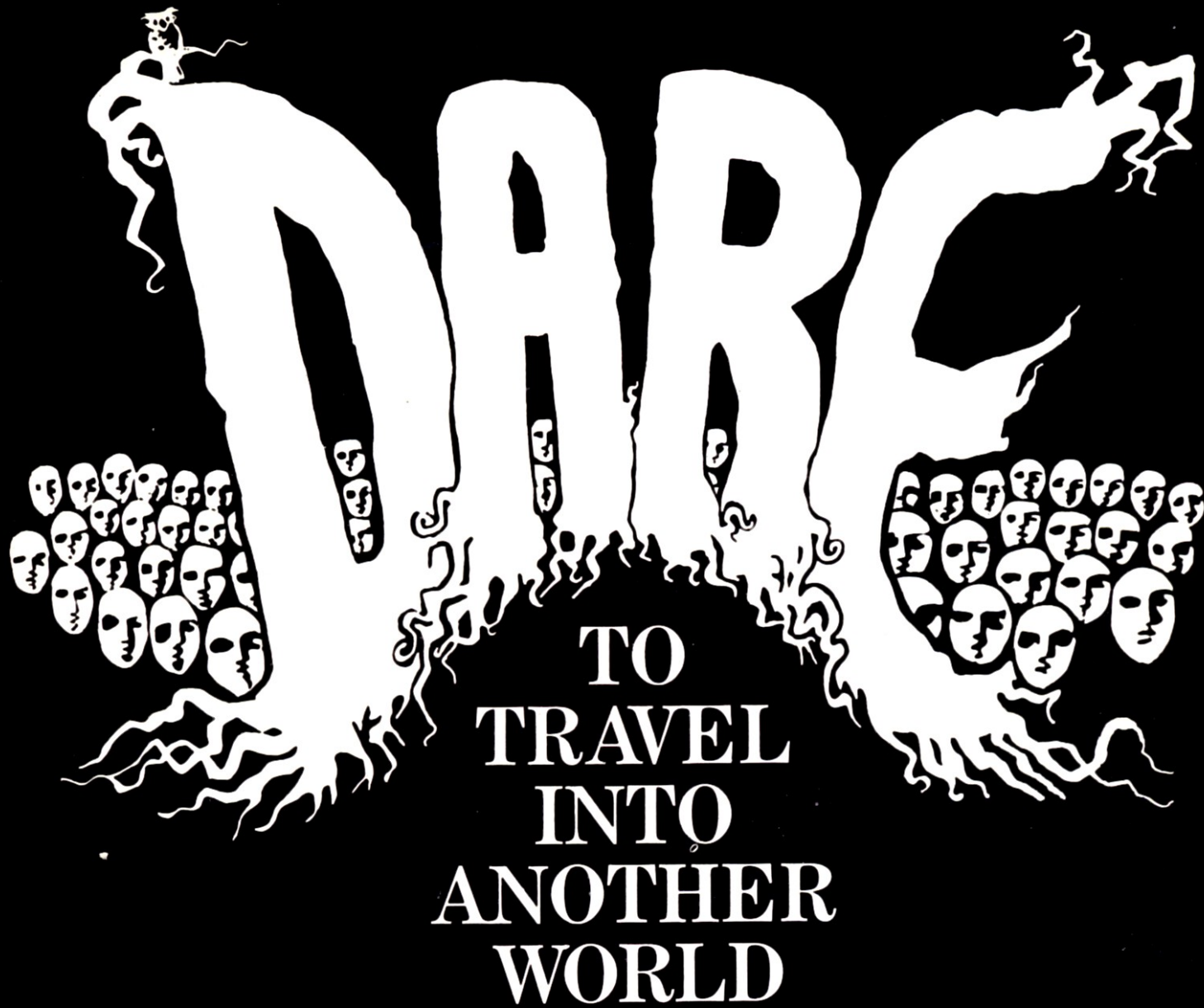
This plodding, dreary, over-long quest saga shows not the slightest glimmer of the kind of magic director Ron Howard wrought in SPLASH and COCOON. After setting up the action nicely in its first hour—midget Warrick Davis encounters brigand Val Kilmer—the film just falls apart as the George Lucas story begins to inject its more overt fantasy motifs with cartoony special effects—flying pixies—and comic relief Brownies, characters more appropriate to Saturday morning TV.

Lucas welds slapstick comedy—like something out of Franco and Ciccio—onto his sword and sorcery action about as subtly as you would patch a boiler with a metal plate. Once Lucas' wisecracking Brownies appear—white guys dressed like African natives but with French accents?!—the film never recovers.

The climactic showdown between evil queen Bavmorda (Jean Marsh) and Raziel is so dramatically unworkable it must be bridged by a piece of walking furniture—a pointless stop-motion effect—only to have Marsh end up by punching her elderly opponent in the nose.

Next to this, HOWARD THE DUCK looks like a minor miscalculation.

o **Frederick S. Clarke**



The title 'NABOC' is rendered in large, white, stylized letters against a black background. The letters are interconnected and feature intricate details: a small figure sits atop the 'N', a small figure is perched on the 'C', and the letters are filled with or surrounded by numerous small, stylized human faces. The base of the letters is depicted as a dense network of roots or tentacles extending downwards.

# NABOC

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INTO  
ANOTHER  
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## NOT OF THIS EARTH

continued from page 51

from a lot of other films which were a lot more fun. They actually have a scene from *HUMANOID FROM THE DEEP* cut into the film. I couldn't tell whether I was supposed to not notice or whether I was supposed to laugh.

There are two inside references to Lords' career, to let us know she hasn't forgotten her roots. In one scene, she jumps in a swimming pool and says, "I could be a mermaid." And in another, she says, "I'm a big girl now," which is kind of funny when you think about how most of her films were supposedly banned or destroyed when they found out she was underage when she made them.

Anyway, I'm real glad I saw this film at a preview screening where I didn't have to pay, and I recommend you not pay for it, either. Maybe if it loses a lot of money, Jim and Traci will learn their lesson and get back to doing what they do well. □

## PHANTASM

continued from page 29  
to tell you!"

*PHANTASM* opened nationwide in 1979 to generally positive reviews, including a favorable notice in *Cinefantastique* (8:4:21). Audiences validated Coscarelli's bizarre supernatural adventure film with a boxoffice take exceeding \$60 million, according to Coscarelli's own publicity. *Variety's* list of boxoffice champs puts its domestic rentals at only \$5,812,103, however, indicating a world-wide take of under \$12 million. Still, not bad for a movie that cost only \$800,000 to make.

Despite *PHANTASM's* success and undeniable merit, Coscarelli's directing career didn't exactly take off after its release. Coscarelli said he turned down numerous offers to do horror films after *PHANTASM*, not wishing to be typed in the genre. His only other film to be released since then has been 1982's *THE BEASTMASTER* (13:2/3:90), a lackluster sword & sorcery entry made for MGM/UA. The film was so bad that fantasy author Andre Norton, whose book served as the basis for the script by Coscarelli and Pepperman, had her name removed from the credits. Another effort made last year called *SURVIVAL QUEST*, starring Lance Henriksen (*ALIENS*, *NEAR DARK*), has yet to find a distributor.

With *PHANTASM II* Coscarelli is taking another stab at success. And it's like old home week. Besides actors Bannister and Scrimm, Coscarelli's dad is back as executive producer. The film's



Rick Herbst as Brian takes a bubble bath with his new-found friend, Elmer the parasite, a pleasantly madcap scene from Frank Henenlotter's *BRAIN DAMAGE*.

producer, Robert Quezada, served as a visual consultant and assistant editor on the original. Other behind-the-camera *PHANTASM* alumni are unit production manager Robert Del Valle and Daryn Okada, a camera grip on the first film who is serving as the sequel's director of photography.

Not back is Coscarelli's longtime associate Paul Pepperman, who quit the film business after *THE BEASTMASTER* to become a financial analyst for Merrill Lynch. Pepperman did drop by the set of *PHANTASM II* for a visit. "It's going to be a bigger hit than the first picture was," he said. □

## BRAIN DAMAGE

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mostly appeal to Henenlotter's fans and other gore hounds are the film's unbelievably repellant splatter set-pieces. One scene of eye-poppingly surreal necrophagy will probably have the Jason Voorhees crowd shouting hosannas and feminists screaming for Henenlotter's blood: in one of his stupors, Brian picks up a girl from a disco and, just as the woman is about to fellate the semi-conscious youth, the creature leaps out of the boy's pants and slams into her throat, draining her skull dry. The scene ranks right up there with *THE RE-ANIMATOR's* Barbara Crampton fending off a zombie medic's amorous severed head, but both the grue and the misogyny is numbing. Mostly, though, Henenlotter is content to film the parasite killings in dead-on un fancy style, not letting us miss a wiggle of Elmer's tail as he does a full-gainer into each unfortunate victim's cranium.

Most of this would be unwatchable if it weren't for the constant barrage of off-kilter humor, which was one of *BASKET CASE's* saving graces: who could forget that film's hero, Duane (Kevin Van Hententryck) plotting the murder of another reprehensible medic all the while shoving burgers into the fanged maw of his monstrous

twin? True to form, Henenlotter displays the same low-down slapstick sensibility in *BRAIN DAMAGE*. There's even a direct homage to *BASKET CASE* with a cameo by Van Hententryck, wicker basket in tow, who encounters Herbst on a subway train and comes out the definite loser in a stare-down between the two lunatics.

But one of the things that made *BASKET CASE* such an unexpected delight was its ability to come up with a truly incongruous and affecting image in the middle of its rickety revenge plot: the hideously deformed Belial weakly clawing his way out of a plastic trash bag; a sympathetic aunt cradling the creature as she reads to the brothers; the monster stroking the forehead of his sleeping sibling. Disappointingly, these moments are rare in *BRAIN DAMAGE*. In one scene Brian and Elmer enjoy a light-hearted frolic in a bubble-bath. Another is charged with genuine pathos, when, late in the action, Brian confesses to his girlfriend that he is a junky and is dangerous to be around. Exchanges like these, however sporadic, raise *BRAIN DAMAGE* from the mire of the genre it so eagerly embraces.

On a technical level, *BRAIN DAMAGE* makes only minor strides since Henenlotter sent Belial and Duane through the window of the Hotel Broslan. The increased \$2 million budget has allowed Henenlotter to ditch the filmed-on-worn-Naugahyde shoestring look that was so essential to *BASKET CASE's* grotty allure and opt instead for the kind of Argento-styled lighting that contributed to *INFERNO's* dreamlike ambience.

In its own meager fashion, Henenlotter's little movie is actually ground-breaking. There are times when, the messy brain-bustin' aside, its *Monster on My Back* plot manages to work up some deep-dish chills. It is honestly disturbing to see Brian begging Elmer

for "another hit," or turning into a scabby, twitching addict as he goes through a full-blown drug-nightmare. Or to see the repeated close-ups of Elmer's needle-like projection sinking into Brian's frying brain, or middle-aged couple Martha and Morris gradually changing into a pair of mummifying, hollow-eyed murderous druggies. But for the most part, Henenlotter's unable to decide what to do with the cautionary theme of his movie, an element which ends up as just so much window-dressing.

The major joy of *BRAIN DAMAGE*, like *BASKET CASE*, is its monster. And Elmer, the brain-snarfling parasite lovingly embodies the movie's gleefully insouciant, blood-spattered charm. Whether he's breaking into a sunny rendition of his signature tune (Tommy Dorsey's '40s hit, "Elmer's Tune") as he's black mailing Brian into another murder, or suggesting to the latter in true Audrey II fashion: "Hey, let's get a Cadillac and pick up some hookers, I can eat a hundred of 'em!", Elmer is one of the most memorable movie monsters in years, summoning up all our favorite images of all those godawful '50s sci-fi monster flicks (particularly that '58 gem, *FIEND WITHOUT A FACE*). Like Belial in *BASKET CASE*, Elmer's a street-smart huckster with a deadly over-bite, and it's a hoot whenever he's planning another bout of cerebellum-slugging in his mellow Disney-narrator tones. But in the end, Elmer is also symptomatic of the problems of Henenlotter's movie: all the brain-power is on his side. □

Henenlotter directs one of the film's many unsavory splatter sequences.



## LIGHT YEARS

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died brain, one thousand years in the future.

The theme of a civilization's mistakes coming back to haunt it is a richly disturbing one, but the chief allure of *LIGHT YEARS* is not its story but the surrealistic and daring visuals, especially the Deformed and Metamorphosis. The clearest evidence that Miramax misunderstood this was their decision to delete a few moments of lovemaking between Sylvain and Airelle, in spite of their original promise to leave the visuals untouched. A scene where the couple spend the night together has been abridged to eliminate any explicit suggestion of a sexual relation between them. Sylvain suddenly appears shirtless without any explanation as to why his shirt has disappeared.

In the original version, the two characters engage unclad in innocent foreplay, consisting of some hugging and kissing while they spend the night together in a nest created by a "sorn," the dinosaur that helps them escape from the energy egg of the Metal Men in which they were trapped.

"French audiences get a kick out of that," said Miramax president Harvey Weinstein in a phone conversation shortly before the film's release last January. "American audiences are more conservative." The cut is an odd one considering that most of the female characters in the film spend most of their time with their breasts exposed, even when otherwise fully dressed. Weinstein insisted that his decision was made on the basis of what he believed American audiences would accept and had nothing to do with fear of an R-rating. The film was released unrated.

*LIGHT YEARS* was probably never destined for blockbuster status, due to its weak narrative and limited, stylized animation. Perhaps if Miramax had pitched this as an adult science fantasy, in the manner of the French comic magazines like *Metal Hurlant*, they could have released it uncut to an audience that would have appreciated it for what it was. It's easily the best bit of SF animation to appear in recent memory. But, alas, that isn't saying much. □

## SHORT CIRCUIT II

continued from page 5

are using ROV's 99.9% of the time. The original game plan called for 60-40% ROV to puppet use. But here we are in the sixth week of production and we have only used [puppets] once. He [Johnson] told me to put it away, we wouldn't need it. However, once we get into



Cinematographer Mark Irwin with Chuck Russell (r) director of *THE BLOB*.

some of the more complex sequences I just don't see any way around it."

And Allard pegged the problems in shooting that have caused the production to get behind schedule to Johnson's over-reliance on the telemetry suits. "We went one day over production on the first one," said Allard. "On this one we have had more problems simply because we are only using the big robots. They were not built to take the pounding we have given them. We already have lost one of the five completely. We turned him upside down, burned out his servos and just beat him up real bad."

And what does director Kenneth Johnson think about all this, working on his first feature film? I talked to Johnson only briefly during my visit to the location. He said he had been hired by Tri-Star to work on another project but was offered *SHORT CIRCUIT II* instead "because I have had a lot of experience with pictures that combined fantasy, effects, and character. This picture touches on all three," said Johnson. "The first film, I see, as [the robot's] birth and childhood. Part 2 is his adolescence, his growing to maturity, his realization that people are not always what they appear to be. Life in the big city is not as simple as he would like. It's *Oliver Twist* come to London and getting into some bad company but learning to pull himself out of it."

I never got to talk with Johnson again, although unit publicist Prudence Emery told me that Johnson had asked to meet with me further. After my very brief interview with producer David Foster on the second day of my visit to the location of *SHORT CIRCUIT II*, Foster called Tri-Star in New York to complain that I was asking rude questions and to inform them that I was now "persona non grata" on the set.

Touchy, isn't he. □

## THE BLOB

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motion for some of the tentacle scenes.

Besides the monster, how much will this version have in common with the original? Although reluctant to discuss story details, Russell said that his film neither departs as much as *THE FLY* nor sticks as close as *INVADERS FROM MARS*. "It's dated," he said of the original. "It was a very low-budget movie, even for its day, and it's not as frightening as it used to be. It may be like *THE FLY* in a way, because thirty years later people remember it through rose-colored glasses."

"It has this incredible spirit, though. We're absolutely true to the spirit. There's a lot of fans of the original, and there's, believe me, enough in it that they'll be satisfied. We've expanded it in terms of scope, action, and thrills."

Then how different will this version be? "This is going to sound like avoidance, but you'll have to decide for yourself," said Russell. "I considered it a huge departure, and I've had people read the script and go, 'Oh yeah!'—I incorporated some of my favorite scenes, and in a way that's all a lot of people remember."

"This isn't an homage, and I'm not deeply infatuated with '50s movies," added Russell. "There was no search for the child who appeared in the original to appear in this one and things like that. I'm just very excited about the concept, and I was very excited about an adventure that happens in one night. I've always wanted to do—I hate to say 'old-fashioned'—but a very large-scale monster movie. I've always wanted to do something where, thematically, you're dealing with Everyman rising to heroic proportions in the face of unlimited danger. It's a classic theme. And I wanted to do this creature effect with the technology that's now available." □

## ELLA

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most difficult shoot of his career, due mainly to a small group of capuchins that did what they felt like doing, when they felt like doing it. "You have to be very patient," he said. "You can condition a dog to do something and it will do it fairly reliably. But a monkey is too smart for that. It takes an attitude of saying 'No' or 'I did that three times already, let's move on to something else.'"

Ella's co-star, Jason Beghe, who plays wheelchair-bound Allan Mann, had a happier time working with Boo, the monkey who played Ella. "I don't think it's because you can't depend on them. I think it's because of their uncomplicated nature relative to ours. There's less bullshit. They're truthful."

"I actually developed a crush on Boo," continued Beghe. "She accepted me as somebody different from other relationships she had. I treated her in a way she hadn't been treated before and she enjoyed and accepted it. The trainer was scared that I was alienating Boo because I was a bit rough-housey with her. But Boo got rough with me. If I wouldn't look at her, she'd pull my hair and giggle, because I was doing the same thing to her. I was teasing her all the time, but when it came time to work, we worked well together."

Unfortunately, a director has a different point of view and a different set of responsibilities. "Working with them was never as much fun as a barrel of monkeys," said Romero. "The most difficult trick the monkeys had to do was stop. To stop and turn at a specific point was virtually impossible for them. You just have to learn their repertoire. You can learn pretty quickly that there are a dozen or so faces that you can distinguish and certain things that produce those faces. If you hold up a parakeet or a snake you'll get a certain look. Some of the funniest moments on the set were when we needed long, curious looks from the monkey. We would have everyone, including the producer, wearing shower caps and playing maracas—doing everything imaginable just to keep the monkey looking."

Because of the animal's erratic performance, scenes involving the monkey will have to be cut up into shots and pieced together to give the illusion of a fluid task done by the simian. Romero had to make do with certain shots because of time and budgetary considerations. He is proud of the final footage in spite of these drawbacks, although he admits to a bit of disappointment.

"If we had had a couple more



weeks and a bigger budget, ELLA could have been a landmark film in terms of using an animal as a principal cast member. If we had been able to wait for the monkeys instead of synthesizing scenes by using two shots instead of one, the film could have been remarkable. But that's nitpicking," he added. "Like bowling a spare instead of a strike."

Romero's next project is APARTMENT LIVING, a horror comedy for New Century/Vista. Though the director said he is not considering doing another sequel to his famed NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD, Romero said he is considering a remake. "I've been talking to Russ Streiner and Jack Russo about it," said Romero, referring to his co-producer and co-author on the original. "There's been so much controversy surrounding that film. It has played on a theatre screen or a video monitor somewhere every day since it was released, but our company only made an aggregate of under \$1 million, and that had to be cut up 28 ways. We've been ripped off every way but Sunday on it. The only people who profited were the various distributors that knocked off copies of it."

Romero freely admitted that the idea of the remake is borne of frustration and would be strictly for economic reasons. He said the remake would be a literal refilming of the original, since he doesn't think anything could be added to the story except updating the time frame. As of now, the project is a topic of conversation with no script or contracts in existence, although the idea is being marketed to prospective backers and makeup artist Tom Savini, a long-time Romero collaborator, has been approached as a possible director. □

## HELL COMES TO FROGTOWN

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because we like the project: we'll give you a million, but we want you and R. J. Kizer to co-direct." Kizer was the editor New World brought in to direct scenes of Raymond Burr for GODZILLA: 1985. Jackson was not pleased to lose control, but ultimately he decided it was a better career move to go for a bigger-budget theatrical release than another low-budget video. New World brought on line producer Bill Edwards, who did not think the script could be shot for \$1,000,000. He and executive in charge of production Neal Nordlinger raised the budget to \$1.5 million. While at Alan Lansburg Productions, Nordlinger had co-produced JAWS 3-D.

Said Jackson, "We had five

accountants, two directors, three producers, one executive in charge of production and two executives in charge of the executive in charge of production—so everybody had his finger in the pie, getting their friends jobs instead of spending money on the film. They wouldn't hire the lighting guy I wanted, so I had to pay additional money out of my pocket to get the right guy."

The film went into production with former wrestler Rowdy Roddy Piper in the lead role of Sam Hellmond (Hell to his friends) and frog masks by 21 year-old Steve Wang. Unfortunately, despite the rising budget, Wang's budget was never increased, limiting what he could accomplish, so most of the mutant frog people are rather inexpressive. However, the radio-controlled mask for Commander Toty, the chief villain, features an impressive range of expressions, including bulging eyes, flaring nostrils, and flickering eyelids.

The production soon ran into trouble. Despite early agreements on a cinematic style inspired by samurai films and Italian westerns, Kizer and Jackson were just too different in their approach. "I knew it wouldn't work—I'm sure he didn't like being in that position anymore than I," said Jackson. "R. J. in my opinion never liked the project. He wanted the money and the directing credit."

Another major source of friction arose regarding the film's photographic look. Jackson, who according to his usual practice was photographing as well as directing the film, clashed with the movie's art director. "The executive in charge of production had a friend of a friend who had never been an art director—he was an architectural draftsman. I never liked the way he dressed the sets, and I kept changing them around to make them look good for the camera—which really upset him and the executive in charge. All my sets looked better after being redressed. He was building them like for a stage play, not for a movie. He



Donald G. Jackson, creator of HELL COMES TO FROGTOWN, with stars Sandahl Bergman and Rowdy Roddy Piper. Jackson now has a sequel in the works.

didn't age it—everything was too new. I kept taking cans of flat black paint and aging everything down.

"After doing this for ten days, the final blow-up was in the bar scene. They had blow-up sex dolls—I found that really offensive. They had naked mannequins—I found that offensive. They had this big poster of Reagan as Max Headroom, which the guy had swiped from a Doonesbury cartoon. So I wanted that all torn down. I got in a violent argument with the art director, who said he was gonna quit. I wish he had. He didn't.

"The next day, when I came to work, they said, 'There's a new cinematographer, and he's not gonna fuck with the art director.' And I was told to watch—they didn't want me to talk to R. J. on the set, only in the trailer, so he was happy.

"So I watched. I got tired of watching after six hours, so I grabbed a camera, went outside, and put together my own 2nd unit crew and started shooting a lot of insert shots. We shot two cameras on the pyrotechnics and fights and shot a lot of closeups of fingers pulling triggers and so on."

By this time, Jackson's co-pro-

ducer Randall Frakes had already been fired for insisting the film be shot as written. Said Jackson, "The script was cut so drastically by Neal [Nordlinger] and R. J. [Kizer] it no longer resembled the action script we wrote. New World said we couldn't afford it, but I'd just shot a whole movie for hardly any money so I know it can be done.

"When I was shooting I was going as fast as anybody could go and everybody was complaining it wasn't fast enough. As soon as they put on another d.p., the pace slowed down to one-half. The original schedule was twenty days. They shot twenty-two days principal, plus five more days of pickups because they didn't cover the action properly—it wouldn't cut together."

The final product pleased neither Jackson nor New World, who, ironically enough, now plan to release it directly to video on June 20th, rather than theatrically. Jackson, meanwhile, is working on a ROLLERBLADE sequel, ROLLERBLADE WARRIORS, which he is shooting independently. "It was a great learning experience, working at a studio on a bigger budget and finding out all the people who have to say 'yes,' before you can do something," he said.

"If anybody likes it—and I can't judge because I know what it might have been—we'll start a 'save-the-frogs' campaign."

The story has a happy ending. As he did with ROLLERBLADE WARRIORS, Jackson has obtained the sequel rights to HELL COMES TO FROGTOWN from New World in a profit participation deal, and plans to shoot a new film independently—to be called FROG WARS. "It would have all the ingredients intended for the first one," he said. "There are 15 or 20 places I can get the money. I want to go back and do it right." □

Makeup artist Steve Wang readies the film's sophisticated animatronic frog.





The makeup effects crew of *MIND KILLER*: sculptor and chief technician Vincent Guastini (l), supervisor Ted Bohus, assistant Pat Denver (r), Bob Denver's son.

## MIND KILLER

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in New Jersey). Ted A. Bohus supervised the team, as well as contributed script material. Bohus, producer of *THE DEADLY SPAWN*, had known Krueger when Krueger was co-publisher of *Fantastic Films* magazine. When *MIND KILLER* began gearing up, Krueger asked Bohus to get some effects people together, assist in conceiving those effects, and help with the story. Bohus assisted in the design of the main "brain creature" with Ron Cole, the project's conceptual illustrator, and Vincent Guastini, who did the sculptures. Also on the makeup crew was Pat Denver, son of *GILLIGAN'S ISLAND* actor Bob Denver, who runs a mask store in Ft. Collins, Colorado.

The cable-controlled monster, which sports a toothy mouth, distended jaw, operating eyelids, and spidery legs, took three weeks to build. Just one of the effects provided by Bohus' team, it's clearly saved for the end to serve as the star of the show. Also featured are now-standard bladder effects and a prosthetic mask to show the brain breaking out of its host's skull.

Prism Entertainment president Barry Collier was impressed enough with *MIND KILLER* to extend his deal with First Films from three to six pictures. *NIGHT VISION* followed, directed by Krueger and scripted by his wife and company secretary and treasurer, Nancy M. Gallanis, with Lee Pomeroy. This psychological thriller features Shirley Ross of *MIND KILLER*, and the tagline: "You're not in Kansas anymore."

After *LONE WOLF*, Krueger plans to return to the director's chair for *PARTY U*, an *ANIMAL HOUSE*-type comedy and an untitled yuppie, *BIG CHILL*-type drama. "We're trying to appeal to different audiences," said Krueger, who looks like he could be cast as

one of the latter's yuppies.

Meanwhile, the theatrical arm of First Films is gearing up for production, pending proper distribution deals. Three projects are in the preproduction stage: one, *MY SOUL TO KEEP*, marks a return to genre product, an SF fantasy which Nancy Gallanis hesitantly described as "a serious *GHOST-BUSTERS*."

Krueger is in no hurry to rush into theatrical agreements. As the videos need not sell many copies to turn a handsome profit (after 20,000 units they're in the black, a figure most direct-to-videos achieve), they will provide a nice financial cushion while First Films waits for the most profitable theatrical deal. Krueger plans to continue shooting the films in the Denver area as long as the talent pool justifies it, believing the city has the potential to become "a little Hollywood."

Meanwhile, the company will continue churning out the video features, at the staggering rate of one every 90 days. Such a pace, they hope, will enable them to be at the top of every commercial trend that comes out of Hollywood. □

## TROMA'S WAR

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ing phones for the company. And rarely does any of their publicity point out that most Troma-produced films (usually three titles annually—the rest of the year's dozen-or-so come from various independent producers around the country) emerge from the company's facilities in Jersey City, New Jersey—about as far off the beaten film-production path as one can get without crossing international boundaries.

Equally instrumental in the company's fifteen year life-span has been Kaufman's and Herz's radical determination never to go into debt. Profits are plowed back into production, and budgets,

while creeping up, rarely top the \$3 million mark (the major exception—the \$8 million *MONSTER IN THE CLOSET*—was done by an independent producer and distributed by Troma). In Kaufman's eyes, this avoidance of the specter of debt is what separates Troma from such indies as Cannon and DeLaurentis Entertainment Group, where disaster was courted with big-budget productions that died at the boxoffice: "Some of the big, high-flying independents are going out of business, or are being sold off, or are on the block. Or are leaving the business owing millions of dollars, leaving stockholders who bought in at fifteen dollars holding paper worth twenty-five cents. We haven't done any of that. And it's doubtful we will."

Not that it's all roses with the Troma Team. At present, the biggest problem is a glutted market. According to Kaufman: "Even the majors can't get their movies on the screen. I don't think there's an independent film playing in Manhattan *anywhere*, other than art films. And here we are in February, this used to be a time when theatres would be bombarding us with requests for movies. I haven't heard the phone ring once."

"But Troma fills a need. The guy who has six screens, and needs a good movie for two weeks knows he's going to get it from us."

And, at a time when films seem more and more designed to follow a direct course to video stores and cable systems, it is the theatre sale that both Kaufman and Herz treasure. "It's a must," said Kaufman. "That's the fun, we *like* the big screen. It's the exciting part of making movies. One of the reasons that Troma's been around and many of the smaller companies have failed is that we have always been dedicated to theatrical distribution. We believe it's the most beautiful art form there is. On a big screen, they're beautiful."

Strange, using the word beauty when talking about films with titles like *CURSE OF THE CANNIBAL CONFEDERATES* and *FAT GUY GOES NUTZOID*. But after a few minutes with any member of the Troma Team, it becomes easy to believe that this shoe-string operation is something more than the typical grade-Z film factory. Hell, who knows—in the War Room of some major power, generals may actually be screening *TOXIC AVENGER* and deciding that, yes, mankind does indeed deserve to survive.

Maybe that's why Kaufman does not want *WAR* confused with your typical Sly Stallone/Chuck Norris rave-up: despite all its pyrotechnics, battle scenes, National Rifle Association poster

graphics and gung-ho ad slogans ("It takes a good war to make heroes of us all!") "There's a bitter quality about it," said Kaufman. "There's nothing glorifying about war in this movie. Nothing even remotely glorifying. We've got these little tourists, these civilian types, perhaps the same kind of people who voted for Ronald Reagan, who like the idea of us invading little countries. Now they actually have to go to war, and see what it's like."

"It's about today's society. War is in again. Based on the media, based on the politicians, and based on the government, war is an acceptable word these days. We therefore felt it was important to deal with this issue, and to try to express what war is all about in Troma terms."

While it appears *WAR* will manage that feat with ease, there was still the question of the title. From a company that has become famous for such flicks as *DEMENTED DEATH FARMMASACRE* and *REDNECK ZOMBIES*, *WAR*—or even *TROMA'S WAR*—seems startlingly minimalist. When the idea is expressed to Kaufman and Herz, there is genuine concern:

"Do you think it's a mistake to go with such a simple title?" asked Kaufman. "Do you think it may be too quiet?"

"How about *NOISY WAR*?" suggested Herz. "*LOUD WAR*?"

Kaufman shook his head. "*BLOOD SUCKING WAR*?"

"How about *GUT-WRENCHING WAR*?"

"*GUT-SUCKING WAR*? *SUCK BLOODY WAR*?"

Herz winced. "Oh God!"

"I think," Kaufman concluded, shrugging, "*WAR*, or *TROMA'S WAR*."

Actually, they ended up calling it *CLUB WAR*, to tie into the film's statement about Yuppie Fascists. Troma, they felt, wasn't well-known enough to appear in the title—yet. □

## SERPENT AND THE RAINBOW

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over the real snake's head, for the scene where the snake leaps out of the Old Crone's mouth and bites Bill Pullman on the face. "When Wes and I were talking about the gag and how he wanted to see the snake bite Pullman, I was dumbfounded," said Anderson. "I couldn't think of any way to do it. Wes suggested, 'Why don't you make something to fit over its face?' So I figured if the snake's mouth was closed, it has such a thin bottom jaw that it would fit into the top of the head, and I could sculpt a bottom jaw wide open, in a striking position."

To film the scene, the snake was de-venomed and its jaw was wired shut. Its head was slipped into the mask through a seam in the side which was then glued shut, and Pullman's hand hid the place where the mask ended and the real snake began. During one of the takes, as the snake was writhing, the seam opened, and the snake started to work its head out of the mask—much to Pullman's discomfort.

The snake which leapt out of the Old Crone's mouth was actually a "snake-on-a-stick" pushed out by someone standing behind the Crone. Getting the Old Crone's mouth to open wide enough was quite a headache, requiring six operators in addition to the snake puppeteer. It took fifteen takes to get the shot right, which was not filmed until the production was back in the U.S. Although the Andersons had the shot prepared, scheduling problems kept pushing it back.

Also filmed in the U.S. was an additional sequence to beef up the film's ending. Said Lance Anderson, "After they screened it, they discovered the audience wanted more satisfaction from the villain, so they invested more money. It started working its way up from a low budget to a medium budget. Over here, they recreated the set from the Dominican Republic and really did some nasty things to the villain." Lance Anderson supplied the makeup for Zakes Mokae but had no time for sculpting or appliance work. "It almost had to be done on the set," he said. "We had four days to put something together, so I did it in gelatin and made him look pretty gross."

One of the most satisfying effects that the Andersons achieved involved Bill Pullman being buried alive. For the scene, Craven wanted a spider to step right on Pullman's eyeball. Since Pullman's

David Anderson operates the Old Crone rising from the grave, an effect dropped from *SERPENT AND THE RAINBOW*.



Roddy McDowall, returning as not-so-fearless vampire killer Peter Vincent, works with director Tommy Lee Wallace during the filming of *FRIGHT NIGHT—PART 2*.

character was supposed to be completely catatonic at that point, using a fake head was the most logical solution. "Spiders are the worst actors you can hire," said David Anderson. "You manipulate them by blowing through a straw. It was very cramped quarters in a coffin with half a panel taken off and my arm inside the head to give it a little bit of rocking motion and the spider inches above my fingers. It would not do what we wanted until the seventeenth or eighteenth take. After it touched the eye, it started spinning a web and biting the face; after we took it off, there was venom all over the face—it was pissed off!"

Summing up his feelings about remaining behind while his son was on the set, Lance Anderson said, "I think it's an ideal situation, as close as we are, to send someone out that worked on it personally, rather than somebody you hired just to go on set. Now I'm looking forward to an assignment where David stays back in the lab and I go to Hawaii!" □

## FRIGHT NIGHT 2

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the sequel's avenging sister to Sarandon's Jerry Dandrige vampire character.

"We gave Regine a very interesting support group; four outrageous bad guys," said Wallace. Russell Clarke plays Belle, Regine's androgynous lover. Behind the camera, Clarke serves as choreographer for Regine's dance numbers as a performance artist. Brian Thompson plays Bosworth, Regine's strongman, a vampire with a body by Nautilus and Frankenstein. Few will recognize Thompson from his bit part in *THE TERMINATOR*: he played the punk at Griffith Observatory who gets his heart (literally) punched out by Swarzenegger. Merritt Butrick, Kirk's son in *STAR TREK II*, plays Ritchie, Charlie Brewster's

college roommate who quickly falls prey, quite seductively, to Regine and Belle. Jonathan Gries plays Louis, the motorcycle-riding fourth member of Regine's evil band, who turns into a werewolf. Gries also played the Wolf Man in *THE MONSTER SQUAD* but never actually donned the fur because another actor was used for the makeup. "This time I get to go all the way," he said, "from hippie vampire to funky werewolf."

On set, Wallace towers over most of his cast and crew. But his large presence offsets a gentle, mellow nature. His directing style is cerebral and yet has the charm of a good dance instructor. Wallace seems driven to succeed where so many sequel directors have failed. And he's secure in the knowledge that he's a product of the genre he's been asked to work in. "We are making a scary and sexy horror movie with a great sense of comic relief," Wallace said in a memo to his crew in early September 1987. "We are gathered here to make the sequel to *FRIGHT NIGHT*. It is terribly important that you have a clear picture of the original in order to participate in making an effective follow-up. I believe *FRIGHT NIGHT* is a crafty, clever horror movie. It cloaks itself in a gawky, funky personality that makes me sometimes think I'm watching a comedy, but in the end it seems to be a legitimate, calculated, well-told horror movie."

In trying to duplicate the success of the Tom Holland original, Wallace encountered more than the usual filmmaking problems. During the first week of shooting at Global Studios, Wallace's wife gave birth to a baby girl. "That made us crazy," said Wallace. "I lost a little sleep, but other than that my daughter seems to have good timing—she came between set-ups. I was worried that I wouldn't be able to attend the birth, but it all worked out." □

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Has Risen From the Grave, Taste the Blood of Dracula, Scars of Dracula, Vampire Lovers, Lust for a Vampire, Countess Dracula, Vampire Circus, Dracula A.D. 1972, Count Dracula & His Vampire Bride, Legend of the 7 Golden Vampires - 75 mins.

### HORROR/SF V (HORRIBLE HONEYES)

Bride of Frankenstein, Bride of the Monster, Brides of Fu Manchu, Brides of Dracula, Frankenstein's Daughter, Daughter of Dr. Jekyll, Jessie James Meets Frankenstein's Daughter, Cat Girl, Devil Girl From Mars, Voodoo Woman, Wasp Woman, Leech Woman, Snake Woman, Night of the Cobra Woman, Attack of the 50-Foot Woman, Prehistoric Women, Werewolf vs. the Vampire Woman, Wild Women of Wonga, She Creature, She Freak, Astounding She Monster, She Demons, Lady Frankenstein, Queen of Blood, Teenage Gang Debs, Girls on Probation, Monica, Story of a Bad Girl, Female Jungle, Blood of Dracula, Straight Jacket, Berserk, Frankenstein Created Woman, Brain That Wouldn't Die, Siderella & the Golden Brain - 78 mins.

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## JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH

continued from page 43

extensive visual effects in-camera, on the set.

Lemorande had asked Harrison Ellenshaw, with whom he had worked on CAPTAIN EO, to supervise the effects, but Ellenshaw declined and agreed to act only as a consultant. Even that was cut short by Ellenshaw's departure for England to work on SUPERMAN IV. When queried about his contribution to JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH, Ellenshaw said, "I've been trying to forget it." Ellenshaw said he had been in favor of using glass mattes, because they can be less expensive yet very effective. "Glass was ideal for the film, because it was all interiors and caves," said Ellenshaw. "I guess they tried it, but it didn't work. Let's face it—the film has not come out."

One of the film's major set-pieces, utilizing a glass painting, involved a scene wherein the young heroes of the story awoke to find their campsite infested with millions of oversized worms. While the first unit filmed the scene using snakes—which, because of their scales, eyes and flicking tongues, looked like snakes and not like large worms—a second unit camera was perched on a platform twenty feet above the floor, shooting through a glass matte which extended the set to give the appearance of a vast chasm. Millions of worms were painted onto the rocks and crevices, and a second, smaller piece of glass was also painted with worms, so that by holding it behind the first painting and moving it in a steady clockwise motion, a rippling effect was created, dubbed by the effects crew, "the roiling worms."

Special effects supervisor John Scheele explained that to speed up the painting process for Lemorande, the matte artists came up with rubber worm stamps that allowed them to quickly apply worms in a pattern to please the director—in different colors, too. "These are things we're just making up on the spot," said Scheele. "If they don't work, we're thinking of completing them as plates [in post-production]. Its true benefit is that there is a chance to balance lighting and set dressing, and see what isn't working—instead of shooting a plate and then later in the matte department finding out we forgot to cover some object."

Scheele never got the chance to complete the effects in post-production. Since the fateful Cannon rough-cut screening, he hasn't been contacted by the production, although he has heard rumors that

additional footage is being shot and that Cannon's financial troubles were partially responsible for the film's delayed release.

Actually the first indication that all was not as it should be on the production occurred during principal photography when it was announced that veteran actress Hermione Gingold (GIGI), cast as "aging but feisty explorer" Agnes Saknussem, would not be appearing in the film after all. A week later the production said that Gingold would appear in the film after all, but that her part had been reduced to a small cameo to be shot in New York during post-production, and edited into master scenes shot on the sets at Laird Studios in Los Angeles. Whether her scenes were ever actually filmed, no one would say.

After his appearance at the world premiere of CAPTAIN EO in September 1987, Lemorande was asked about the presence or absence of Gingold in his movie, and had this to say: "That's an interesting story. The solution we came up with to that problem is actually better than what we originally planned." Contacted a week later for details, Lemorande completely reversed himself: "There's no story here," he stated, claiming that since Agnes Saknussem appears only briefly seated in a chair, it was always intended to film her scenes at a later date.

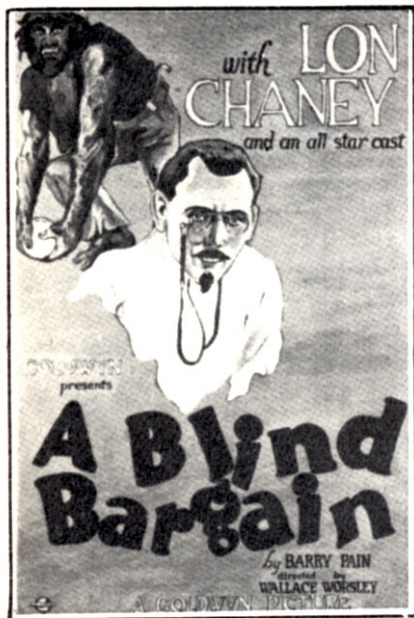
Asked to explain this novel approach to filmmaking, Lemorande said, "This is an unusual film, and it was intended to be filmed in an unusual way. Some sequences were not intended to be filmed until others were completed." According to Lemorande, the concepts of pre-production, production, and post-production are antiquated, and unifying the three is much more efficient and creative. As an example of this increased efficiency and creativity, he pointed out that similar techniques were used on CAPTAIN EO, the seventeen-minute Michael Jackson musical short which he produced for Disney theme parks, rumored to have cost between \$15-\$20 million.

Although Albert Pyun's ALIEN FROM L.A. was a much smaller-scale production than JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH, Pyun is pleased with the results. So, apparently, is Cannon, who scheduled the film for release earlier this year, while Lemorande's JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH remains on the shelf. Pyun, meanwhile, has been offered other Cannon projects, including SPIDER-MAN, SUPERMAN V, and MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE II. □

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# LETTERS

## TRIBUTE TO MOVIE POSTER GREAT REYNOLD BROWN TOUCHES ARTIST

The enthusiastic attitude of Stephen Rebello and your magazine to the work of Reynold Brown, my father [Poster Artists of the '50s (18:3/4:40)], has caused him to rethink his attitude about the art. Generally our society has treated illustrators as the ugly stepchildren of the art community. It was as if the art was not legitimate, that commercialization—whatever that is—degraded the work. My father was of course affected by that attitude, and even had come to think of his own movie work as of little value. He found it harder and harder to accept that people really could enjoy the work, enjoy it for what it is now becoming, a record of a period, of attitudes, of us and of the skills of one particular artist.

This article has done much to tear down some strong psychological barriers for my father. It has instilled in him an appreciation for and sense of pride in an important body of work. He had harbored much anger which had become generalized toward the movie industry. This article has done much to purge him of that anger. I just wanted you to know that this article did a lot more than simply document an important period in movie poster illustration.

Franz Brown,  
Whitney, NE

## OPERA CORRECTION

The caption for the still at the top of page 30 [18:2/3] should read "Argento on the Rome location

for INFERNO with his father Salvatore and Lamberto Bava." This mistake is especially regrettable because very few photos of Salvatore Argento—especially with his son—have ever been taken. I know Argento was pleased to see it published, in light of his recent bereavement at his father's death.

This rare still had been incorrectly captioned by an Italian publicist. Anyone familiar with press attaches in Italy will know how aggravating and useless they can be. For a classic example of the lackadaisical approach they have to their industry, look no further than the Italian poster for OPERA, which credits John Charleson instead of Ian Charleson as the star of the film.

Alan Jones  
London, ENGLAND

## BUT TASHA DOES COME ON A BIT STRONG

Your reviewer's sexist comments about security chief Tasha Yar [18:2/3:4] cast a pall on the value of anything he may have to say. As for attempts to "... modulate her butch hairstyle and masculine duties..." the reviewer should take a good look at recent fashion magazines and at the kinds of jobs women hold today. I could also ask what's wrong with being butch, but not from a man who demands male camaraderie and sisterly affection without mentioning meaningful friendships between the sexes.

Sexual stereotypes do not mingle well with a "sense of wonder."

Serge Mailloux  
Ontario, CANADA

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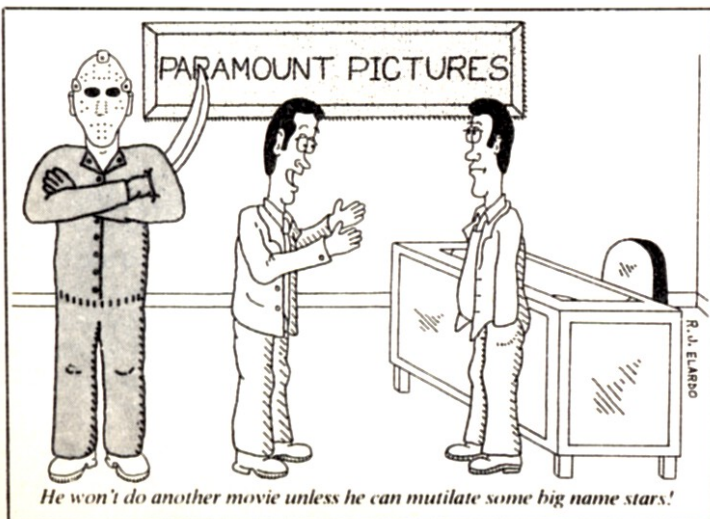
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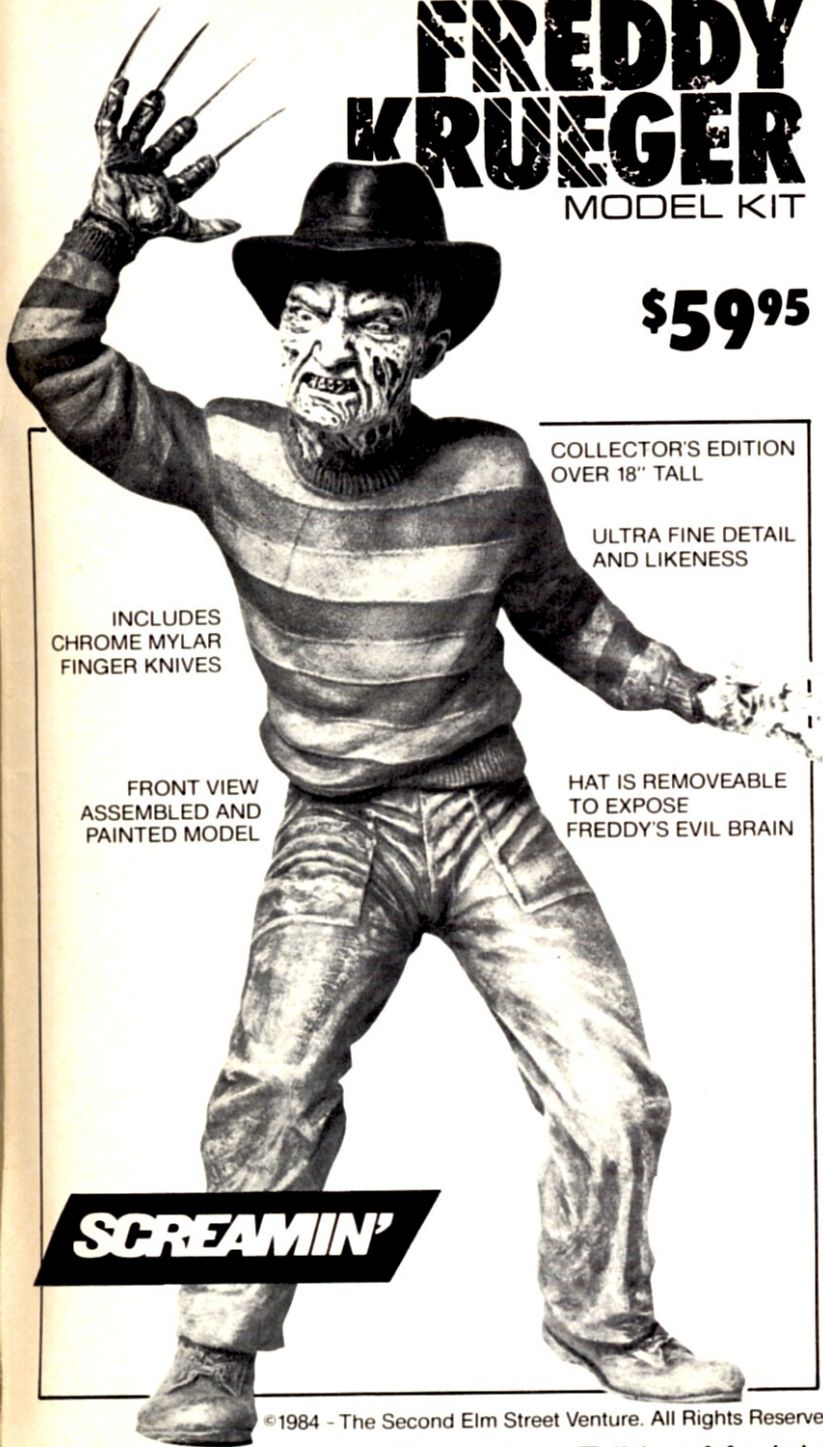
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